

*Speculative lucubrations of
an Aristotelean philosopher*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

Speculative lucubrations of an Aristotelean philosopher.

He is the mouthpiece of that majority in modern society which has worked itself out an elaborate policy full of sophistry and paradox, behind which every member clumsily hides his personal views. His “respectable deference to public opinion,” is short-hand for hypocrisy. 4

Imbued by ardent patriotism, the Aristotelean philosopher postulates that the intellect of the average Briton is much higher than the average intellect of humanity at large. 5

He confuses phenomena for which the agency of “disembodied spirits” is claimed, with natural phenomena for which every tittle of supernaturalism is rejected. 5

He, who does not believe in Spiritualism cannot believe in Christianity, for the very foundation of that faith is the materialization of their Saviour. 6

If Spiritualism and Occultism are superstition and falsehood, so is Christianity with its Mosaic miracles and the witches of Endor, its resurrections and materialization of angels, and hundreds of other spiritual and occult phenomena. 6

Is belief in the Holy Ghost less blind than belief in the “ghosts” of our departed fathers and mothers? Is faith in an abstract and never-to-be-scientifically-proven principle any more “respectable” or worthy of sympathy than that other faith of believers, as earnest as Christians are, that the spirits of those whom they loved best on earth, their mothers, children, friends, are ever near them, though their bodies may be gone? 7

Physical as well as psychological phenomena court experiment and the investigations of science; whereas, supernatural religion dreads and avoids such. The former claims no miracles, no supernaturalism to hang its faith upon, while religion imperatively demands them, and invariably collapses whenever such belief is withdrawn. 7

An abusive, uncompromising bigot is more honest than a mild-spoken, sneering hypocrite.

A lady who will not blush to empty in the view of all a tumbler of stiff brandy and soda, will stare, in shocked amazement, at another of her sex smoking an innocent cigarette! 8

Madame Blavatsky defends the Cause of Truth from its detractors and traducers.

Facts existed in the “pre-scientific past,” and errors are as thick as berries in our scientific present.

Modern science is atheistic, phantasmagorical, and always in labour with conjecture. Not to know is its climax. With whom then, is the criterion of truth to be left? 10

Are we to abandon Truth to the mercy and judgment of a prejudiced society, constantly caught trying to subvert that which it does not understand? A society ever seeking to transform sham and hypocrisy into synonyms of “propriety” and “respectability”? 11

¹ Frontispiece by Nik-159.

During that incessant warfare, in which old creeds and new doctrines, conflicting schools and authorities, revivals of blind faith and incessant scientific discoveries running a race as though for the survival of the fittest, swallow up and mutually destroy and annihilate each other — it would take a sage much wiser than King Solomon himself to decide between fact and fiction! 12

Mental slavery is the worst of all slaveries.

It is a state which, as brutal force has no real power, indicates either an abject cowardice or a great intellectual weakness. Undisputed fact is the only tribunal we submit to and recognize it without appeal. 13

The Theosophical Society is an absolute and uncompromising Republic of Conscience; preconception and narrow-mindedness in science and philosophy have no room in it: they are as hateful and as much denounced by us, as dogmatism and bigotry in theology. 14

The worms of sham and hypocrisy have gnawed the roots of wisdom and hardened the human heart.

Instead of spiritualizing matter, the Shakers of America, and the “Apostles” of the Calcutta New Dispensation, materialize spirit. 15

Spiritualism, as a sect, has as much a right for recognition as any other Christian sect. But then, how can belief in spirits, the surviving souls of departed men — quite an orthodox Christian dogma — be held disreputable by the Christian public? 17

As long as the Christian public professes belief in, and veneration for its ancestral faith, it behoves them little to throw the accusation of “degrading superstitions and credulity” into the teeth of Spiritualism. 19

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Speculative lucubrations of an Aristotelean philosopher.

He is the mouthpiece of that majority in modern society which has worked itself out an elaborate policy full of sophistry and paradox, behind which every member clumsily hides his personal views. His “respectable deference to public opinion,” is shorthand for hypocrisy.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (7), April 1881, pp. 159-60. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (LOGIC VERSUS PERIPATETIC) III pp. 109-15.

It is hardly the province of our journal to notice the fugitive vagaries of occasional correspondents in daily papers, unless by chance some article happens to contain some useful or very interesting and quite impersonal information. We have held to the good rule till now, and hope to continue. On this principle we would have hardly given any attention to a certain paragraph in the *Bombay Gazette* (March 16th, 1881) signed “your Peripatetic,” and headed “Current Philosophy,” were it not for the strong illustration it affords us of that perverse spirit, called “respectable deference to public opinion,” but which “for short” we call hypocrisy. The writer in question throws stones into our garden and, but for our having by this time grown somewhat indifferent to that sort of thing, we might well find in his personality alone abundant excuse for retorting upon him. But we have a far more serious object in view, and this once the speculative lucubrations of the “current” philosopher will do us better service than his party have perhaps, bargained for. For, for us, “Peripatetic” decidedly represents a party. He is the mouthpiece of that majority in our modern-day society which has worked itself out an elaborate policy full of sophistry and paradox, behind which every member clumsily hides his own personal views. The words of their *Revelation*, “I would thou wert cold or hot” apply to our modern society far better than to the church of the Laodiceans; and knowing *their* works and that they are “neither cold nor hot,” but like a faithful thermometer follow the changing moral temperature of the day, we will [110] now analyse some of the desultory rhapsodies of the writer on “Current Philosophy.” When we have done that, he is at liberty to go on chuckling over his pen which traced his rather stale denunciation of the “simplicity” of Mr. * * * * and the Šimla “Occultists”! The “simplicity” of the gentleman whom the “Peripatetic” names in the *Gazette* in full — an example of bad breeding we shall surely not follow — being an adjective applied by him to a man of the most acute and remarkable intellect, and one whose ability and talents are universally recognized throughout India and Europe, speaks ill, by the by, for his own powers of discrimination. When one presumes to sign himself a “Peripatetic,” he ought to honour his classical *pseudonym* by at least borrowing some logic for the occasion if he has none himself to spare. Having thus cursorily noticed the poor fling at the Šimla “simple-

tons,” we will now lay before our readers a sample of the logic of that alleged pupil of Aristotle, which “Peripatetic” so paradoxically assumes to be.

Imbued by ardent patriotism, the Aristotelean philosopher postulates that the intellect of the average Briton is much higher than the average intellect of humanity at large.

Quoting Carlyle’s famous proposition (who may have had such “Peripatetics” in mind) that the population of Great Britain consists of “thirty millions mostly fools,” and having offered by way of self-incense on the altar of patriotism his own postulate that

. . . the intellect of the average Briton is, however, certainly higher than the average intellect of general humanity,

the critic proceeds — if we may be forgiven the Americanism — to *scalp* believers in phenomena. The simplicity of the “Simla occultists,” however, he confesses,

. . . is outdone by the innocence of some “titled people” who, according to the evidence of a witness in the Fletcher trial,¹ “will believe anything” — a statement which appears strictly accurate.

He confuses phenomena for which the agency of “disembodied spirits” is claimed, with natural phenomena for which every tithe of supernaturalism is rejected.

Fletcher and Company, together with two-thirds of the trading professional mediums, we may leave to his tender mercies. Having denounced these for the last six years, we even heartily agree in some respects with the writer; as, for instance, when he deprecates those who “would believe anything.” No one of the overcredulous who recognize so readily in dark *séances*, in every shadow on the wall or in the [111] medium’s pocket handkerchief, their “aunt, or uncle, or somebody” has any right to complain if they are regarded as “fools” though even in such cases, it is far more honourable to be found out to be an honest fool, than a cheating medium. Nor do we blame the writer for laughing at those who so trustingly believe

. . . that when it pleased the medium to wind up the music box, one of this intellectual audience asserted that he felt that virtue had gone out of him, and that this magnetism was winding up the box;

uncharitable though it be, it is yet natural. And were “Peripatetic” to stop his philosophical disquisitions with the just remark . . .

And yet probably these “titled fools” would be ready enough to talk of the dark superstitions of the benighted Hindu, or indeed, if they happened to be fervent Protestants, of the superstitions of their Catholic neighbours, while doubtless believing that they themselves were making a scientific investigation,

this review of his “Current Philosophy” need never have seen print. We would not have even noticed the ridiculous blunder he falls into, with so many other critics, in confusing phenomena for which the agency of “disembodied spirits” is claimed, with

¹ [For an explanation of the Fletcher trial, see “The worms of sham and hypocrisy have gnawed the roots of wisdom and hardened the human heart,” on page 15 below. — ED. PHIL.]

natural phenomena for which every tittle of supernaturalism is rejected. We might have overlooked his ignorance, as he was, perhaps, never told that *natural* are the *only* phenomena Theosophists accept, and the only way they are trying to fathom the mystery; and that *their* object is precisely to put down every element of superstition or belief in the miraculous or the supernatural, instead of countenancing it as he believes. But what are we to think of a philosopher, an alleged Peripatetic, who after exercising his acute reasoning upon the “folly” of the *superstitious* beliefs of the spiritualists and the occultists, winds up his arguments with the most unexpected rhetorical somersault ever made. The proposition which he emits in the same breath seems so preposterously illogical and monstrous, that we can characterize it but in the felicitous words of Southey, *viz.*, as

One of the most untenable that ever was advanced by a perverse or paradoxical intellect.¹

Listen to him and judge ye, logicians and true disciples of Aristotle: “No, no!” exclaims our philosopher. [112]

Religious beliefs which are imbibed with our mother’s milk, and which most around us accept, cannot be regarded as superstitions. It is natural to the human mind to regard doctrines presented to it with the authority of bygone generations as probable and natural. Earnest belief of this nature *may not always command our respect*, but it must invariably attract our sympathy. The superstitious follies of “table-turners” and “spiritists” of all sorts can only command our hearty contempt. How much exposure will be necessary to teach persons of this sort that secrets of nature which have been hidden from investigators like Newton, Davy, Faraday, and Tyndall are not likely to be opened to them?

He, who does not believe in Spiritualism cannot believe in Christianity, for the very foundation of that faith is the materialization of their Saviour.

If Spiritualism and Occultism are superstition and falsehood, so is Christianity with its Mosaic miracles and the witches of Endor, its resurrections and materialization of angels, and hundreds of other spiritual and occult phenomena.

And we beg leave to tell him, that he, who does not believe in *Spiritualism* cannot believe in Christianity, for the very foundation of that faith is the *materialization of their Saviour*. A Christian if he has any right at all to attack spiritual phenomena, can do so but on the ground of the dogmas of his religion. He can say — “Such manifestations are of the devil” — he dare not say “they are impossible, and *do not exist*.” For, if spiritualism and occultism are a superstition and a falsehood, then is Christianity, the same Christianity with its Mosaic miracles and witches of Endor,² its resurrections and materialization of angels, and hundreds of other spiritual and occult phenomena.

¹ [Robert Southey (1774–1843), *Sir Thomas More, or Colloquies on the progress and prospects of society*. London: John Murray, 1829; Vol. I, p. 45]

² [The Witch of Endor is a woman who, according to the Hebrew Bible, was consulted by Saul to summon the spirit of prophet Samuel in order to receive advice against the Philistines in battle, after prior attempts to consult God through sacred lots and prophets had failed.]

Is belief in the Holy Ghost less blind than belief in the “ghosts” of our departed fathers and mothers? Is faith in an abstract and never-to-be-scientifically-proven principle any more “respectable” or worthy of sympathy than that other faith of believers, as earnest as Christians are, that the spirits of those whom they loved best on earth, their mothers, children, friends, are ever near them, though their bodies may be gone?

Does “Peripatetic” forget, that while there are many real inquirers among well-known men of science, like Messrs. Wallace, Crookes, Wagner, Butleroff, Zöllner, Hare, Fichte and Camille Flammarion, who have thoroughly investigated and hence thoroughly believe in the phenomena called “spiritual” till a better name is found, and in some cases are even spiritualists themselves; no Tyndall, no Huxley, no Faraday, no investigator yet since the world was created, has ever been able to prove, let alone one of the religious *human* dogmas but even the existence of a God or of the soul? We are not “Spiritualists,” and, therefore, speak impartially. If religious “earnest belief invariably attracts our sympathy even without commanding our respect,” why should not as earnest a belief in spiritual phenomena — that most consoling, most sacred of all beliefs, hope in the survival of those [113] whom we most loved while on earth — “attract our sympathy” as well? Is it because it is unscientific and that exact science fails to always prove it?

Physical as well as psychological phenomena court experiment and the investigations of science; whereas, supernatural religion dreads and avoids such. The former claims no miracles, no supernaturalism to hang its faith upon, while religion imperatively demands them, and invariably collapses whenever such belief is withdrawn.

But religion is far more *unscientific* yet. Is belief in the Holy Ghost, we ask, less *blind* than belief in the “ghosts” of our departed fathers and mothers? Is faith in an abstract and never-to-be-scientifically-proven principle any more “respectable” or worthy of sympathy than that other faith of believers as earnest as Christians are — that the spirits of those whom they loved best on earth, their mothers, children, friends, are ever near them, though their bodies may be gone? Surely we “imbibe with our mother’s milk” as much love for her as for a mythical “Mother of God.” And if one is *not* to be regarded as a superstition then how far less the other! We think that if Professor Tyndall or Mr. Huxley were forced to choose between belief in the materialization of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes or Knocke, and that of their own mothers in a *séance*-room, they would rather risk to pass for “fools” in the latter locality. For phenomena, however rarely, have yet more than once been proved *real* and so announced by men of undoubted authority in science. Phenomena are based upon scientific grounds; on facts pertaining to *exact* science — upon physiology, pathology, magnetism, all correlating into psychological manifestations. Physical as well as psychological phenomena court experiment and the investigations of science; whereas, *supernatural* religion dreads and avoids such. The former claims no miracles, no supernaturalism to hang its faith upon, while religion imperatively demands them, and invariably collapses whenever such belief is withdrawn. Personally, as we said before, we do not believe in the agency of “disembodied spirits” in the physical mediumistic

phenomena, but it gives us no right for all that, to dogmatise and try to force others to reject their belief. All that we can say now is, that the last word has not yet been told of these phenomena; and that as theosophists, *i.e.*, searchers after truth who claim no infallibility, we say that the Spiritualists after all may be as right in their way as we think we are right in ours. That no spiritualist has ever believed in “miracles” or supernatural interferences, their [114] immense literature well proves. Can “Peripatetic” say as much of Christian belief? Hear the Bishop of Bombay proclaim publicly his professions of faith. He says to his clergy:

We, who by professional honour are bound to maintain and to set forth the supremacy of the supernatural over the natural . . . have staked our very social existence on the reality and the claims of the supernatural. Our dress, our status, our work, the whole of our daily surroundings, are a standing protest to the world of the importance of spiritual things; that they surpass, in our eyes at least, the more aggressive pretensions of what is temporal. We are bound then for our own self-respect to justify what we daily proclaim.

An abusive, uncompromising bigot is more honest than a mild-spoken, sneering hypocrite.

A lady who will not blush to empty in the view of all a tumbler of stiff brandy and soda, will stare, in shocked amazement, at another of her sex smoking an innocent cigarette!

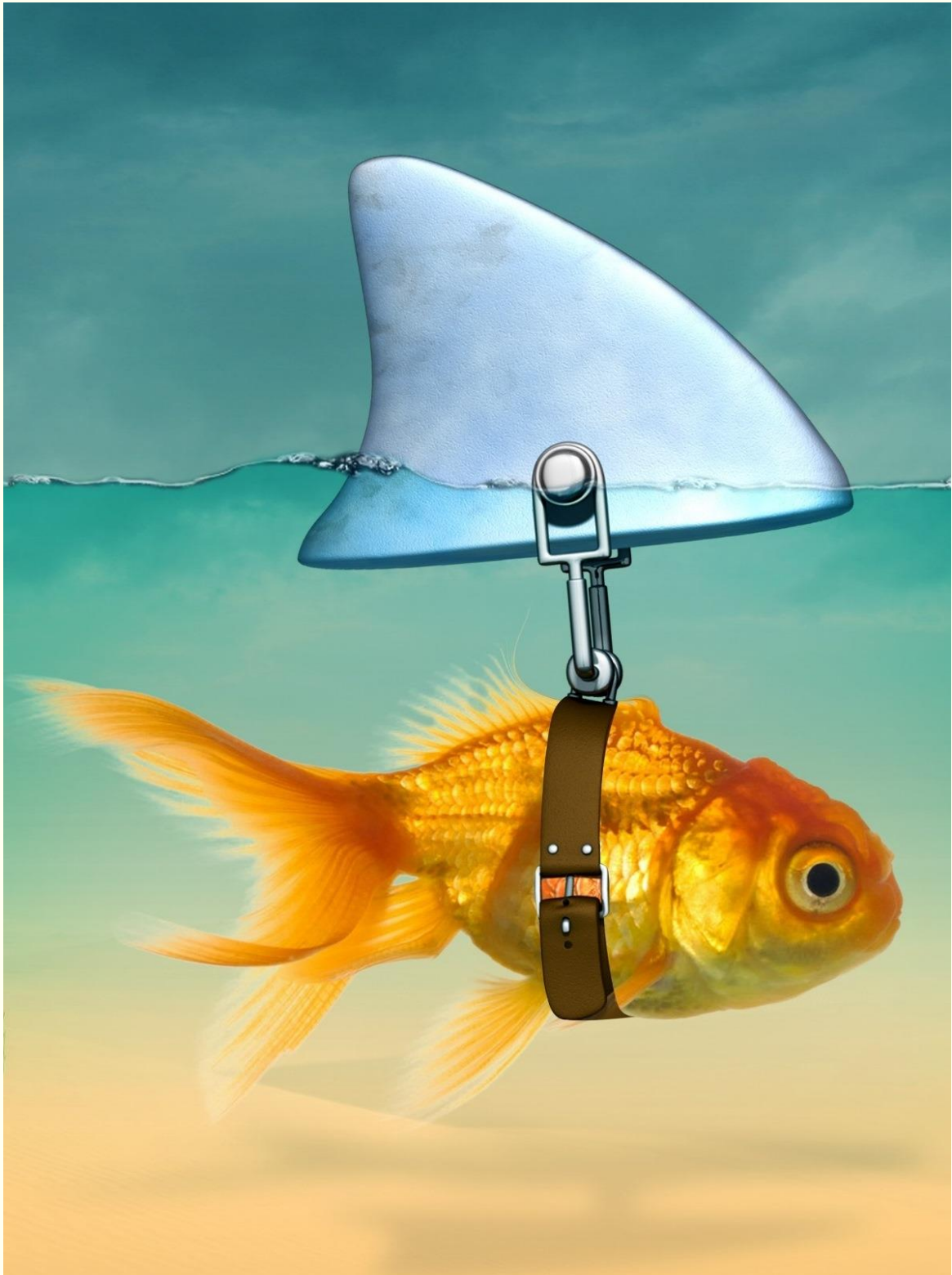
And so is every believer *bound* to do in whatsoever he may believe, if he be but *honest*. But the whole status of modern faith is reflected in these Jesuitical words of “Peripatetic.” Belief in the “supernatural” may not command his respect, but he feels obliged to sympathize with it; for it is that of those around him, and considered respectable; in short, it is the bread-and-cheese State religion, and perchance — that of his principals and superiors. And yet for as honest and earnest a belief as spiritualism, he has “but contempt.” Why? Because it is unpopular; because his society people who were forced into such a belief by the evidence of *facts* hide it from the others, and Nicodemus-like they run to its professors but under the cover of night. It is not fashionable. Religion and spiritualism are in society relatively like peg-drinking and cigarette-smoking. A lady who will not blush to empty in the view of all a tumbler of stiff brandy and soda, will stare, in shocked amazement, at another of her sex smoking an innocent cigarette! Therefore, is it too that the writer in the *Gazette* who ought to have called himself a “Sophist,” signs *himself* a “Peripatetic.” He is certainly *not* a Christian, for were he one, he would never have ventured upon the *lapsus calami*¹ which makes him confess that Christianity “may not always command our respect”; but still he would pass for one. Such is the tendency of our nineteenth century that a man of the educated, civilized world, will rather utter the most illogical, absurd sophism than honestly confess his belief either one way or [115] the other! He finds, that:

It is natural to the human mind to regard doctrines presented to it with the authority of bygone generations as probable and natural.

¹ [slip of the pen]

DOWN TO EARTH SERIES
LUCUBRATIONS OF AN ARISTOTELEAN PHILOSOPHER

If this be so, we invite all the Peripatetics, past, present and future, to point out to us a doctrine half as tenacious of life, or more universally believed in by countless “by-gone generations,” in every corner of the world, than the faith in “ghosts” and “spir-its.” Really and indeed, we prefer a thousand times an honest, abusive, uncompromising bigot to a mild-spoken, sneering hypocrite.



Madame Blavatsky defends the Cause of Truth from its detractors and traducers.

Facts existed in the “pre-scientific past,” and errors are as thick as berries in our scientific present.

Modern science is atheistic, phantasmagorical, and always in labour with conjecture. Not to know is its climax. With whom then, is the criterion of truth to be left?

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (10), July 1881, pp. 217-18. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (A REPLY TO CRITICS) — Our final answer to several objections, Vol. III pp. 221-26.

In the ordinary run of daily life speech may be silver, while “silence is golden.” With the editors of periodicals devoted to some special object “silence” in certain cases amounts to cowardice and false pretences. Such shall not be our case.

We are perfectly aware of the fact that the simple presence of the word “Spiritualism” on the title page of our journal, “causes it to lose in the eyes of materialist and sceptic fifty per cent of its value” — for we are repeatedly told so by many of our best friends, some of whom promise us more popularity — hence an increase of subscribers, would we but take out the “contemptible” term and replace it by some other, synonymous in meaning, but less obnoxious phonetically to the general public. That would be acting under *false pretences*. The undisturbed presence of the unpopular word will indicate our reply.

That we did not include “Spiritualism” among the other subjects to which our journal is devoted “*in the hopes that it should do us good service among the Spiritualists*” is proved by the following *fact*: From the first issue of our *Prospectus* to the present day, subscribers from “Spiritual” quarters have not amounted to four per cent on our subscription list. [222] Yet, to our merriment, we are repeatedly spoken of as “Spiritualists” by the Press and — our opponents. Whether really ignorant of, or purposely ignoring our views, they tax us with *belief in Spirits*. Not that we would at all object to the appellation — too many far worthier and wiser persons than we, firmly believing in “Spirits” — but that would be acting under “false pretences” again. And so, we are called a “Spiritualist” by persons who foolishly regard the term as a “brand,” while the orthodox Spiritualists, who are well aware that we attribute their phenomena to quite another agency than Spirits, resent our peculiar opinions as an insult to their belief, and in their turn ridicule and oppose us.

Are we to abandon Truth to the mercy and judgment of a prejudiced society, constantly caught trying to subvert that which it does not understand? A society ever seeking to transform sham and hypocrisy into synonyms of “propriety” and “respectability”?

This fact alone ought to prove, if anything ever will, that our journal pursues an honest policy. That, established for the one and sole object, namely, for the elucidation of truth, however unpopular, it has remained throughout true to its first principle — that of absolute impartiality. And that as fully answers another charge, *viz.*, that of publishing views of our correspondents with which we often do not concur ourselves. “Your journal teems with articles upholding ridiculous superstitions and absurd ghost stories,” is the complaint in one letter. “You neglect laying a sufficient stress in your editorials upon the necessity of discrimination between facts and *error*, and in the selection of the matter furnished by your contributors,” says another. A third one accuses us of not sufficiently rising “from supposed facts, to principles, which would prove to our readers in every case the former no better than fictions.” In other words — as we understand it — we are accused of neglecting scientific *induction*. Our critics may be right, but neither are we altogether wrong. In the face of the many crucial and strictly scientific experiments made by our most eminent *savants*,¹ it would take a wiser sage than King Solomon himself, to decide now between *fact* and *fiction*. The query, “What is truth?” is more difficult to answer in the nineteenth than in the first century of our era. The appearance of his “evil genius” to Brutus in [223] the shape of a monstrous human form, which, entering his tent in the darkness and silence of night, promised to meet him in the plains of Philippi — was a *fact* to the Roman tyrannicide; it was but a dream to his slaves who neither saw nor heard anything on that night. The existence of an antipodal continent and the heliocentric system were *facts* to Columbus and Galileo years before they could actually demonstrate them; yet the existence of America, as that of our present solar system, was as fiercely denied several centuries back as the phenomena of Spiritualism are now. *Facts* existed in the “pre-scientific past,” and errors are as thick as berries in our scientific present. With whom then, is the criterion of truth to be left? Are we to abandon it to the mercy and judgment of a prejudiced society constantly caught trying to subvert that which it does not understand; ever seeking to transform *sham* and *hypocrisy* into synonyms of “propriety” and “respectability”? Or shall we blindly leave it to modern *exact* Science, so-called? But Science has neither said her last word, nor can her various branches of knowledge rejoice in their qualification of exact, but so long as the hypotheses of yesterday are not upset by the discoveries of today.

Science is atheistic, phantasmagorical, and always in labour with conjecture. It can never become knowledge *per se*. Not to know is its climax,

says Prof. A. Wilder, our New York Vice-President, certainly more of a man of Science himself than many a scientist better known than he is to the world. Moreover, the learned representatives of the Royal Society have as many cherished hobbies, and are as little free of prejudice and preconception as any other mortals. It is perhaps, to religion and her handmaid theology, with her “seventy-times seven” sects, each

¹ See the article following this: “Science, Phenomena and the Press.” — Editor, *The Theosophist*. [Published herein, on page 15 *et seq.*, below. — ED. PHIL.]

claiming and none proving its right to the claim of truth, that, in our search for it, we ought to humbly turn? One of our severe Christian Areopagites¹ actually expresses the fear that “even some of the absurd stories of the *Purānas* have found favour with *The Theosophist*.” But let him tell us, has the Bible any less of “absurd ghost stories” and “*ridiculous* miracles” in it than the Hindu *Purānas*, the Buddhist *Maha-Jataka*, or even one of the most “shamefully superstitious publications” [224] of the Spiritualists?² We are afraid in all and one it is but:

Faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last. . .³

and — we decline accepting anything on faith.

During that incessant warfare, in which old creeds and new doctrines, conflicting schools and authorities, revivals of blind faith and incessant scientific discoveries running a race as though for the survival of the fittest, swallow up and mutually destroy and annihilate each other — it would take a sage much wiser than King Solomon himself to decide between fact and fiction!

In common with most of the periodicals we remind our readers in every number of *The Theosophist* that its “Editors disclaim responsibility for opinions expressed by contributors,” with some of which they (we) do not agree. And that is all we can do. We never started out in our paper as *Teachers*, but rather as humble and faithful recorders of the innumerable beliefs, creeds, scientific *hypotheses*, and — even “superstitions” current in the past ages and now more than lingering yet in our own. Never having been a sectarian — *i.e.*, an interested party — we maintain that in the face of the present situation, during that incessant warfare, in which old creeds and new doctrines, conflicting schools and *authorities*, revivals of blind faith and incessant scientific discoveries running a race as though for the survival of the fittest, swallow up and mutually destroy and annihilate each other — *daring, indeed, were that man* who would assume the task of deciding between them! Who, we ask, in the presence of those most wonderful and most unexpected achievements of our great physicists and chemists would risk to draw the line of demarcation between the *possible* and the *impossible*? Where is the *honest* man who conversant at all with the latest conclusions of archæology, philology, palæography, and especially Assyriology, would undertake to prove the superiority of the religious “superstitions” of the civilized Europeans over those of the “heathen,” and even of the fetish-worshipping savages?

¹ [Members of the supreme tribunal of old Athens]

² We quote from his letter.

³ [Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh* (1817), “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan”]

Mental slavery is the worst of all slaveries.

It is a state which, as brutal force has no real power, indicates either an abject cowardice or a great intellectual weakness. Undisputed fact is the only tribunal we submit to and recognize it without appeal.

Having said so much, we have made clear, we hope, the reason why, believing no mortal man infallible, nor claiming that privilege for ourselves, we open our columns to the discussion of every view and opinion, provided it is not proved absolutely supernatural. Besides, whenever we make room for “unscientific” contributions it is when these treat upon subjects which lie entirely out of the province of physical science — generally upon questions that the average and [225] dogmatic scientist rejects *a priori* and without examination; but which the real man of science finds not only possible, but after investigation very often fearlessly proclaims the disputed question as an undeniable fact. In respect to most transcendental subjects the sceptic can no more disprove than the believer prove his point. FACT is the only tribunal we submit to and recognize it without appeal. And before that tribunal a Tyndall and an igno-ramus stand on a perfect par. Alive to the truism that every path may eventually lead to the highway as every river to the ocean, we never reject a contribution simply because we do not believe in the subject it treats upon, or disagree with its conclusions. Contrast alone can enable us to appreciate things at their right value; and unless a judge compares notes and hears both sides he can hardly come to a correct decision. *Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt*¹ — is our motto; and we seek to prudently walk between the many ditches without rushing into either. For one man to demand from another that he shall believe like himself, whether in a question of religion or science is supremely unjust and despotic. Besides, it is absurd. For it amounts to exacting that the brains of the convert, his organs of perception, his whole organization, in short, be reconstructed precisely on the model of that of his teacher, and that he shall have the same temperament and mental faculties as the other has. And why not his nose and eyes, in such a case? Mental slavery is the worst of all slaveries. It is a state which, as brutal force has no real power, always denotes either an abject cowardice or a great intellectual weakness.

Among many other charges, we are accused of not sufficiently exercising our editorial right of selection. We beg to differ and contradict the imputation. As every other person blessed with brains instead of calves’-foot jelly² in his head, we certainly have our opinions upon things in general, and things occult especially, to some of which we hold very firmly. But these being our personal views, and though we have as good a right to them as any, we have none whatever [226] to force them for recognition upon others. We do not believe in the activity of “departed spirits” — *others* and among these, many of the Fellows of the Theosophical Society do — and we are bound to respect their opinions, so long as they respect ours. To follow every article from a contributor with an *Editor’s Note* correcting “his erroneous ideas” would amount to turn-

¹ [From Horace, *Satires*, I, 2, 24: “while striving to shun one vice, fools run into its opposite.” — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [*i.e.*, animal collagen, the source of gelatine.]

ing our strictly impartial journal into a *sectarian* organ. We decline such an office of “Sir Oracle.”

The Theosophical Society is an absolute and uncompromising Republic of Conscience; preconception and narrow-mindedness in science and philosophy have no room in it: they are as hateful and as much denounced by us, as dogmatism and bigotry in theology.

The Theosophist is a journal of our Society. Each of its Fellows being left absolutely untrammelled in his opinions, and the body representing collectively nearly every creed, nationality, and school of philosophy, every member has a right to claim room in the organ of his Society for the defence of his own particular creed and views. Our Society being an absolute and uncompromising *Republic of Conscience*, preconception and narrow-mindedness in science and philosophy have no room in it. They are as hateful and as much denounced by us as dogmatism and bigotry in theology; and this we have repeated *usque ad nauseum*.¹

Having explained our position, we will close with the following parting words to our sectarian friends and critics. The materialists and sceptics who upbraid us in the name of modern Science — the Dame who always shakes her head and finger in scorn at everything she has not yet fathomed — we would remind of the suggestive but too mild words of the great Arago:²

He [is a rash man] who outside of pure mathematics pronounces the word “impossible” [lacks prudence].³

And to theology, which under her many *orthodox* masks throws mud at us from behind every secure corner, we retort by Victor Hugo’s celebrated paradox: “In the name of RELIGION we protest against all and every religion!”



¹ [*i.e.*, to a nauseating or sickening extent.]

² [Dominique François Jean Arago, 1786–1853, French mathematician, physicist, astronomer, freemason, supporter of the Carbonari revolutionaries, and politician.]

³ [*Food for thought*: “Let us award a just, a brilliant homage to those rare men whom nature has endowed with the precious privilege of arranging a thousand isolated facts, of making seductive theories spring from them; but let us not forget to state, that the scythe of the reaper had cut the stalks before one had thought of uniting them into sheaves!” — François Jean Arago]

The worms of sham and hypocrisy have gnawed the roots of wisdom and hardened the human heart.

Instead of spiritualizing matter, the Shakers of America, and the “Apostles” of the Calcutta New Dispensation, materialize spirit.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (10), July 1881, pp. 218-20. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (SCIENCE, PHENOMENA, AND THE PRESS) III pp. 227-33.

*Fiat Justitia, ruat cælum*¹ is not the motto of our century. Nothing is so amusing as to watch at every fresh exposure of some tricky medium — of whom there are a good many — the attitude of the Press in general, and those time-serving editors of *pseudo* first-class papers — of whom there are still more, especially. In order to flatter the sympathies, and bow to the prejudices of their subscribers, they, who speak in terms of the utmost veneration of a church they often do not believe in, will, at the same time, denounce, in the most objugatory and vituperative language, spiritualism in which they occasionally themselves believe, and Theosophy of whose tenets they know next to nothing.

Such is the present attitude of some Anglo-Indian papers in relation to the Fletcher case. The trial and sentence to hard labour of Mrs. Fletcher — who was punished for fraudulently obtaining valuables and not at all for being, or rather *not* being a medium — seems to have thrown some of them into ecstasies of joy. Two of them especially (one a Lahore and the other an Allahabad paper) have got quite off their balance and gone beating about the bush after those “impostors calling themselves Theosophists and Spiritualists.” (!?) We seriously doubt whether the respective editors of the two above-mentioned papers could ever hope for the high honour of being received into the company of even the flunkeys of some of our titled “Spiritualists and Theosophists” of England, whom they include in the category of “impostors.” But, as there is every probability, in the [228] case in hand, of a certain professional envy on their part against spiritual mediums, their irritation may have its *raison d’être*. The mediums “produce” while these editors “absorb” *spirits*. Hence, with an eye to their incurable and well-known bibacity² we have to be charitable. One, who is generally as drunk as David’s sow,³ can hardly be made responsible for what he says. The phenomena of *obsession* and *possession* assuming most varied forms, one medium will be *obsessed* by “an imaginary goblin,” while another one will be *possessed* — by the seven *fiends of drink*. Hence we accuse the two “medium-editors” of gross incon-

¹ [Legal phrase, meaning “Let justice be done though the heavens fall.”]

² [Archaic for the habit of drinking too much alcohol.]

³ [According to Grose (1811), from an instance in which a man named David Lloyd, who was accustomed to showing his six-legged sow as a curiosity, found his intoxicated wife where he expected the sow to be.]

sistency. For, if the public is made to credit the witty definition of that American reporter who notified the world of his discovery that “materialized spirits are but *frozen* whiskey,” they ought certainly to show themselves a little more grateful toward their brother mediums than they do. Leaving, however, English and Yankee-Irish editors to the tender mercies of *delirium tremens* and the spiritual snakes in their boots, we will broach our subject at once.

That spiritualism has made itself unpopular, is an undeniable fact. That its phenomena have become so, chiefly owing to claims of supernatural intervention for them, to the agency of *spirits* in the production of the manifestations, is as incontrovertible. But when the sceptic has once pronounced in tones of contempt the tabooed word “Spiritualism,”

- Is there one man in ten thousand who fully realizes the meaning of that which he so abuses?
- Is it *Spiritualism* proper that is denounced?
- Or, that faith which professes blind belief in the communication of the living men with the spirits of their departed friends, through mediums?
- Or, is it only belief in the occurrence of occult phenomena that the average public so strongly objects to?
- Which?

And now, we are inclined to demonstrate, that were Society — Christians and materialists included — ever capable of acting with anything like impartiality, and of reasoning its antipathies before it became entirely blinded by its prejudices, spiritualism could never have become its *bête noire* as it now has. At all events, whether judged from its social, [229] or examined from its philosophical standard, it stands certainly higher than any of the sects of the “revivalists” — against which Society has nevertheless not a word to say. Since its ranks are composed chiefly of the well-educated classes, and that spiritualism was never half as aggressive and offensive as we find most of the sects of dissenters, the public has no right to taboo it, as it does.

However it may be, as the policy of our paper is to present all things in their *true* light, we mean now to seriously analyse spiritualism. Owing to long years of study, we believe we are more competent to judge of it than those who really know nothing of it — as the native and the Anglo-Indian press for instance. On the other hand, our own theories as to the agency producing most of the phenomena being diametrically antagonistic to those of the Spiritualists — the accusation of partiality in our case can but fall to the ground.

We will now show the inconsistency of the anti-Spiritualists of all classes.

If it is against “*Spiritualism*” proper that the public wrath waxes so hot, then every Christian who abuses it is untrue to his creed. He plays into the hands of Infidelity. Besides having been used for ages in contradistinction to that of materialism, the word spiritualism served no farther back than the first half of our century to designate the doctrines and religious life of that class of Christian mystics who believed themselves to be under the guidance of the Divine Spirit; the adjective “Spiritualist”

having been always applied to those persons who spiritualized the Jewish Scriptures. In the past centuries such was the appellation given to Jacob Böhme,¹ Madame Guyon,² Miguel de Molinos³ and other Quietists⁴ and Mystics. In our present age it belongs by right to the Shakers of America,⁵ and even more so to the “Apostles” of the Calcutta *New Dispensation*,⁶ than to the lay believers in mediumistic phenomena, who — we are sorry to say, instead of spiritualizing matter, *materialize* Spirit. . . .

Spiritualism, as a sect, has as much a right for recognition as any other Christian sect. But then, how can belief in spirits, the surviving souls of departed men — quite an orthodox Christian dogma — be held disreputable by the Christian public?

As the notion stands though, the most that could be brought by orthodox Christians against modern Spiritualism is the accusation of being one of the many *heretical* Christian sects [230] of the day. Not only have the majority of Spiritualists retained their belief in the Bible and Christianity, but even the most infidel among them do no worse than the Unitarians — who assert the simple humanity of Christ, contending that he was no more than a divinely illuminated prophet — a *medium*, say the Spir-

¹ [Jakob Böhme, 1575–1624, German philosopher, Christian mystic, and Lutheran Protestant theologian. He was considered an original thinker by many of his contemporaries within the Lutheran tradition, and his first book, commonly known as *Aurora*, caused a great scandal. Böhme had a profound influence on later philosophical movements such as German idealism and German Romanticism. Hegel described Böhme as “the first German philosopher.” — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

² [Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon (commonly known as Madame Guyon) 1648–1717, French mystic accused of advocating Quietism, although she never called herself a Quietist. Quietism was considered heretical by the Roman Catholic Church, and she was imprisoned from 1695 to 1703 after publishing the book *A Short and Very Easy Method of Prayer*. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

³ [Miguel de Molinos, 1628–1696, Spanish mystic and chief representative of the religious revival known as Quietism. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

⁴ [Quietism is the pejorative name given (especially in Roman Catholic theology) to a set of Christian beliefs that rose in popularity in France, Italy, and Spain during the late 1670s and 1680s, particularly associated with the writings of the Spanish mystic Miguel de Molinos (and subsequently François Malaval and Madame Guyon), and which were condemned as heresy by Pope Innocent XI in the papal bull *Cœlestis Pastor* of 1687. The “Quietist” heresy was seen to consist of wrongly elevating “contemplation” over “meditation,” intellectual stillness over vocal prayer, and interior passivity over pious action in an account of mystical prayer, spiritual growth and union with God (one in which, the accusation ran, there existed the possibility of achieving a sinless state and union with the Christian Godhead). — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

⁵ [The Shakers were one of a few religious groups which were formed during the 18th century in the Northwest of England, originating out of the Wardley Society. James and Jane Wardley and others broke off from the Quakers in 1747 at a time when the Quakers were weaning themselves away from frenetic spiritual expression. The Wardleys formed the Wardley Society, which was also known as the “Shaking Quakers.”] Future leader Ann Lee and her parents were early members of the sect. This group of “charismatic” Christians became the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing (USBCSA). Their beliefs were based upon spiritualism and included the notion that they received messages from the spirit of God which were expressed during religious revivals. They also experienced what they interpreted as messages from God during silent meditations and became known as “Shaking Quakers” because of the ecstatic nature of their worship services. They believed in the renunciation of sinful acts and that the end of the world was near. Meetings were first held in Bolton, England, where the articulate preacher, Jane Wardley, urged her followers to:

Repent. For the kingdom of God is at hand. The new heaven and new earth prophesied of old is about to come. The marriage of the Lamb, the first resurrection, the new Jerusalem descended from above, these are even now at the door. And when Christ appears again, and the true church rises in full and transcendent glory, then all anti-Christian denominations — the priests, the Church, the pope — will be swept away.

Other meetings were then held in Manchester, Meretown (also spelled Mayortown), Chester and other places near Manchester. As their numbers grew, members began to be persecuted, mobbed, and stoned; Lee was imprisoned in Manchester. The members looked to women for leadership, believing that the second coming of Christ would be through a woman. In 1770, Ann Lee was revealed in “manifestation of Divine light” to be the second coming of Christ and was called Mother Ann. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

⁶ [For an in-depth analysis, consult “Blavatsky against Spiritualism,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

itualists. Hence Spiritualism *as a sect has as much a right for recognition* and at least outward respect, *as any other Christian sect*. But it is perhaps their peculiar *belief* that is so hateful to the *unbelievers*? Another and still grosser inconsistency! For how can belief in spirits, the surviving souls of departed men — quite an orthodox Christian dogma — be held disreputable by a Christian public? We do not mean to be disrespectful but only fair, in asking the following question: Were a sane person placed under the necessity of choosing, but had yet the privilege of a free choice, which of the two stories, think ye, he would accept as the most likely to have occurred: that of a materialized angel and the she-ass *whose mouth was opened by the Lord to speak to Balaam in a human voice*,¹ or that of Mr. Crookes' materialized Katie King?² It really would not be generous in us to insist upon a direct answer. But we will do this: placing the Spiritualists on one side, and the Christian Adventists or Millenarians on the other, we will offer our reader a bird's-eye view of both. The former, in company with more than one eminent man of science, will be represented by us at his greatest disadvantage; namely, in a spiritual circle, in a half-darkened room singing in chorus a spiritual melody, and anxiously waiting for the apparition of a materialized relative. . . . The Millenarian, surrounded by his family and household gods roosting on the top of a tree, or the roof of his house, singing Christian psalms and waiting as anxiously for his Christ to appear and carry them all away into heaven over a crumbling universe! . . . We insist that our readers should not misunderstand us. We laugh no more at the faith of the Millenarian who, notwithstanding many such days of failure when instead of catching hold of his Saviour, he found himself drenched to the bones, [231] caught a bad cold and was occasionally killed by lightning,³ than we deride that of the believer in the materializations. We simply ask why should the press and the public permit themselves to despise and laugh to scorn the Spiritualist, while hardly daring to mention, let alone laugh, at the beliefs of the former? Learned divines meet and seriously discuss and devise means "to be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." Dr. Tyng, one of the best educated clergymen of New York, actually pronounces these words: →

¹ [Numbers xxii, 28; 2 Peter ii, 16. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

² [See page 22 below. Also consult *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, ("THE PHILADELPHIA "FIASCO," OR WHO IS WHO?) Vol. I, pp. 56-72.]

³ Hardly a few years since such a case happened in America to some unlucky Millenarians, the elders of whose churches had prophesied the day and the hour of the second advent of Christ. They had sold their properties and given it away; settled their worldly affairs after which most of them climbed on that solemn day to the highest trees and hills. A shower, accompanied by a terrible thunderstorm and lightning brought two of the Adventist families together with their trees *down* to the ground instead of taking them Elijah-like to heaven. And that the belief of a *physical* advent of Christ is not confined to the ignorant classes alone is proved by the following clip from an American newspaper of 1878.

"A circular has been issued signed by the Rev. Dr. James H. Brookes of the Presbyterian Church, St. Louis; the Rev. Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, Jr., of this city; Bishop W.R. Nicholson of the Reformed Episcopal Church, Philadelphia; W.Y. Morehead; the Rev. A.J. Gordon of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church, Boston; Maurice Baldwin; the Rev. H.M. Parsons of the Presbyterian Church, Buffalo; and the Rev. Dr. Rufus W. Clarke of the Dutch Reformed Church, Albany, inviting those *who believe in the personal pre-millennial advent of Jesus Christ to meet at the Church of the Holy Trinity in this city, on the 30th and 31st of October and the 1st of November, to listen to a series of papers on the pre-millennial advent of Jesus Christ, and to join in such discussion as the topics may suggest. A large number of professors, ministers, and laymen have endorsed the call. Among them are the older Tyng, Bishop Vail of Kansas, Professor Kellogg of Alleghany Presbyterian Seminary, the Rev. Dr. Imbrie of Jersey City, George T. Pentecost, the Boston Evangelist, and other well-known men.*" — *New York Sun*.

Yes, we firmly believe in the coming advent. A conference was held in London in February last, and the result was gratifying. . . . At this coming the dead that have died in Christ will rise first, and then those of his children who are alive will be caught up into the clouds with them, [232] and their bodies will undergo a change, and they will dwell in heavenly places for a season!!

As long as the Christian public professes belief in, and veneration for its ancestral faith, it behoves them little to throw the accusation of “degrading superstitions and credulity” into the teeth of Spiritualism.

Hence, the logical induction: So long as the Christian public professes belief in, and veneration for its ancestral faith, it behoves them little to throw the accusation of “degrading superstitions and credulity” into the teeth of spiritualism. They are no better than the *hypocrites* denounced in *Luke*; those who are commanded by Jesus to cast out first the beam of their own eye, and then offer to pull out the mote that is in their brother’s organ of sight. As for those gentlemen of the press, who, lacking the courage to denounce the superstitions of the strong and the mighty, fall back upon those, whose unpopularity has made them weak and helpless, they act more than in a cowardly way. They are the “Bashi-Boozooks”¹ of Mrs. Grundy’s² army — those, who under the cover of darkness and in perfect safety to themselves spoil and *finish* the wounded. The Theosophists and Spiritualists have at least the courage of their opinions. They openly and fearlessly proclaim their heterodox and unpopular beliefs and face the enemy’s fire without flinching. How many of our colleagues of the press will dare to follow our example? Verily, the ugly cancer of sham and hypocrisy has *gnawed* down to the very bone of educated Society! We find truthfulness and moral courage now, but in a few atheists, who, like Bradlaugh³ and Colonel Ingersoll⁴ bravely defy the whole world. Even great and independent men like Tyndall, cower down before public wrath. He who did not blush to speak of Spiritualism as of “an intellectual whoredom” was made before the storm of indignation raised by him in the English clergy to half recant his publicly expressed scientific opinion of the absolute “potency of matter.” But he never thought of offering an apology for his insult to those of his scientific colleagues who believed in Spiritual phenomena. . . .

¹ [Or bashi-bazouk (Ottoman Turkish), “one whose head is turned, damaged head, crazy-head,” *i.e.*, leaderless and disorderly, was an irregular soldier of the Ottoman army, raised in times of war. The army chiefly recruited Albanians and Circassians as bashi-bazouks, but recruits came from all ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire including slaves from Europe or Africa. They had a reputation for bravery, but also as an undisciplined group, notorious for looting and preying on civilians as a result of a lack of regulation.]

² [A figurative name for an extremely conventional or priggish person, a personification of the tyranny of conventional propriety. A tendency to be overly fearful of what the respectable might think is also referred to as Grundyism. Although she began life as a minor character in Thomas Morton’s play *Speed the Plough* (1798), Mrs. Grundy was eventually so well established in the public imagination that Samuel Butler, in his novel *Erewhon*, could refer to her in the form of an anagram (as the goddess Ydgrun). As a figure of speech she can be found throughout European literature. — *Wikipedia*.]

³ [Charles Bradlaugh, 1833–1891, English political activist and atheist. He founded the National Secular Society in 1866. Students to consult “Religious conversion means absolute perversion,” in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]

⁴ [Robert Green Ingersoll, 1833–1899, American writer and orator during the Golden Age of Free Thought, who campaigned in defence of agnosticism. He was nicknamed “The Great Agnostic.” Students to consult “Past and future are here and now,” in our Secret Doctrine’s Third Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

DOWN TO EARTH SERIES
SHAM AND HYPOCRISY HARDENED THE HUMAN HEART

And now dropping off the adjective of “Spiritual” from the word phenomena — let us see how far sceptics are justified in throwing a slur upon the latter and to reject the testimony of the greatest men of modern Science in favour of their genuineness. And that, whenever a scientist went to [233] the trouble of *seriously* investigating the phenomena, he was forced to admit the objective reality of these weird manifestations, is henceforth an historical fact. And it is precisely that which we purpose to prove in the next article.



Spiritualism corroborated by modern Science.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (10), July 1881, pp. 220-21. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE EVIDENCE OF SCIENCE) III pp. 233-38.

From Professor Hare,¹ the great American chemist, a world-wide celebrity, a quarter of a century ago, down to Professor Zöllner,² the Leipzig astronomer in 1878, each and all of the men of Science who, undertaking to expose the so-called *Spiritual* phenomena in the name of science, went yet to work honestly at their investigation — found themselves baffled and finally completely beaten by *facts*.

So, in 1853, Professor Hare publicly expressed the following determination:

I feel called upon as an act of duty to my fellow creatures, to bring whatever influence I possess to the attempt to stem the tide of *popular madness*, which, in defiance of reason and science is fast setting in favour of the gross delusion called “Spiritualism.”³

Two years later, and after that man of science had brought his keenest acumen to bear upon the phenomena, and had invented all kinds of machinery through which he hoped to detect tricky mediums, but to no avail, Professor Hare *became a Spiritualist*. The Harvard professors by whom the learned doctor had been regarded for forty years as an authority upon all scientific subjects, now denounced his “insane adherence to the gigantic humbug.” But the phenomena were found *facts* and had the best of him as they had of many more of learned professors at various times. [234]

In 1869 the Committee of the Dialectical Society of London,⁴ composed of twenty-eight persons of education and good public repute,⁵ after sittings with mediums for months, and having applied to them the most crucial tests, was compelled to acknowledge: →

¹ [Robert Hare, 1781–1858, early American chemist. In 1853, Professor Hare conducted experiments with mediums. A year later he converted to Spiritualism and wrote several books that made him very famous in the United States as a Spiritualist. In 1855 he published *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations*, a work criticized by scientists but welcomed by Spiritualists. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

² [Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner, 1834–1882, German astrophysicist who studied optical illusions, and an early psychical investigator.]

³ *History of Spiritualism*, p. 115

⁴ “At a Meeting of the Council of the London Dialectical Society, held on the 26th January, 1869, on the motion of Dr. Edmunds, a committee was appointed to investigate the phenomena alleged to be spiritual manifestations and to report thereon.” (Copy of the Minutes of the Council)

⁵ Among whom we find the names of Mr. Grattan Geary, the present editor of the *Bombay Gazette*, of Mr. H.G. Atkinson, and of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh — see *Report on Spiritualism, of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society*, London 1871.

- 1 That the phenomena that they had witnessed were *genuine*, and impossible to simulate;
- 2 That the most extraordinary manifestations thoroughly upsetting many preconceived theories as to natural laws, *did* happen, and *were undeniable*. Some had occurred in their own families.

In 1870 Mr. Crookes, F.R.S., had expressed his opinion in print that he believed

. . . the whole affair was a superstition, or at least an unexplained trick . . . a delusion of the senses.

In 1875, in his letter upon Katie King, the young lady “Spirit” who visited him for three years during *séances* held in the presence of a number of men of science, we find Mr. Crookes confessing as follows:

To imagine . . . the Katie King of the last three years to be the *result of imposture* does more violence to one’s reason and common-sense than to believe her to be what she herself affirms. . . . [a “spirit”]

With that man of science, the discoverer of Radiant Matter, that *Force* he had so derided after a long course of honest and scientific investigations had “become not a matter of opinion but of absolute knowledge.”¹

A confirmed philosophical sceptic converted to Spiritualism.

Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace,² the great English naturalist, writes in his *preface* to *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*:

Up to the time when I first became acquainted with the facts of Spiritualism, I was a confirmed philosophical sceptic. . . . I was so thorough and confirmed a materialist that I could not at that time find a place [235] in my mind for the conception of spiritual existence. . . . *Facts, however, are stubborn things.* . . . The facts beat me. They compelled me to accept them *as facts* . . . [and] led me to accept Spiritualism.³

Mr. Nicholas Wagner,⁴ Professor of Zoology at the St. Petersburg University, writes at the beginning of his investigations:

I accepted Professor Butleroff’s⁵ invitation to witness the phenomena produced by the medium Home who lived in his house, with the greatest mistrust and even aversion.

¹ *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, pp. 7, 112

² [Alfred Russel Wallace OM, FRS, 1823–1913, British naturalist, explorer, geographer, anthropologist, biologist and illustrator. He is best known for independently conceiving the theory of evolution through natural selection; his paper on the subject was jointly published with some of Charles Darwin’s writings in 1858. This prompted Darwin to publish *On the Origin of Species*. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

³ p. 7

⁴ [Refer to biographical notes by Boris de Zirkoff, at the end of this document.]

⁵ [*ibid.*]

At the end of about twenty *séances* he closes a narrative full of the most inexplicable phenomena upsetting every scientific hypothesis with the following admission:

I have presented a truthful account of *facts* witnessed by myself. I desire that all those who will not believe me, may prove to me that I am wrong; but in such a case they will have to support their case with *facts* as positive and as undeniable as those that forced me to my present conviction, that the mediumistic phenomena ARE REAL EXISTING FACTS.¹

Nor has Professor Wagner given up to this day his firm belief in the objective reality of such manifestations; for only a few months ago he closes another article upon phenomena obtained, which are the repetition of Professor Zöllner's experiments with Dr. Slade² only with non-professional mediums (ladies of high society) with these words:

Again, these facts convince us of the necessity of widening the domain of recognized science and its methods and means for the exploration of the invisible and unknown world. . . .³

Professor Butleroff of St. Petersburg, a chemist of the greatest eminence and a member of the Academy of Sciences — one of the few men of learning who, seeking in Science truth alone, feared not to pass into the minority — has been investigating the phenomena for many years. In the April number of the *Russkiy Vyestnik*,⁴ an orthodox journal of the greatest respectability, we find him beginning a long and scientific article upon “Empiricism and Dogmatism in the [236] Domain of Mediumship” with an unequivocal confession of faith. He writes:

Firmly and fully convinced of the objective reality of mediumistic phenomena, I find necessary to point out in print the first attempts made to connect some of these phenomena with scientific hypotheses.

And then he proceeds to enumerate several great names of men of science who struck “rock bottom” in Germany, in the shifting sands of phenomena, which had hitherto eluded all scientific grasp. These are Dr. Zöllner, Professor of Physics and Astronomy in the University of Leipzig, who stands in the front ranks of the scientific men of Europe; Dr. Fichte,⁵ the son of the celebrated German philosopher, for years Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tübingen,⁶ and who was at first the

¹ *Yevropeyskiy Vestnik* (Messenger of Europe), 1876

² [Henry Slade, 1835–1905, far-famed medium who lived and practiced in both Europe and North America.]

³ See *Transcendental Physics*, p. 148, translation by Charles Carleton Massey, Barrister-at-Law (Vice-President of the British Theosophical Society).

⁴ [The *Russian Messenger* or *Russian Herald*, is the title of three magazines published in Russia during the 19th and early 20th centuries.]

⁵ [Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 1762–1814, German philosopher who became a founding figure of the philosophical movement known as German idealism, which developed from the theoretical and ethical writings of Immanuel Kant. Recently, philosophers and scholars have begun to appreciate Fichte as an important philosopher in his own right due to his original insights into the nature of self-consciousness or self-awareness. Fichte was also the originator of *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*, an idea that is often erroneously attributed to Hegel. Like Descartes and Kant before him, Fichte was motivated by the problem of subjectivity and consciousness. Fichte also wrote works of political philosophy; he has a reputation as one of the fathers of German nationalism. — *Wikipedia*.]

⁶ In contradistinction to the Hegelian pantheism Fichte established a system of his own which he called — “Concrete Theism.”

greatest sceptic and opponent of the theory which upheld the reality of the phenomena; Dr. Wilhelm Weber,¹ Professor of Physics — the founder of the doctrine of the Vibration of Forces. “No scientific reputation stands higher in Germany than that of Weber.”² Professor Perty³ of Geneva; Professor Scheibner,⁴ of Leipzig University, “a well-known and highly distinguished mathematician”;⁵ Dr. Gustav T. Fechner,⁶ an eminent natural philosopher, another Professor of Physics at Leipzig, and von Hoffmann; Baron von Hellenbach of Vienna,⁷ etc., etc. Many of these, namely, Professors Weber, Scheibner, Fechner and others, have been witnesses to Mr. Zöllner’s scientific experiments with Dr. Slade, the medium, and have taken a part in them. Speaking of the physical phenomena which had taken place in that medium’s presence, Professor Zöllner says as follows:

I reserve to later publication in my own treatises the description of further experiments, obtained by me in twelve *séances* with Mr. Slade, and as I am expressly authorized to mention, in the presence of my friends and colleagues, Professor Fechner, Professor Wilhelm Weber, the celebrated electrician from Göttingen, and Herr Scheibner, Professor of Mathematics . . . who are *perfectly* convinced of the reality of the observed facts, altogether excluding imposture or prestidigitation.⁸ [237]

These descriptions of the experiments in the most extraordinary phenomena may be found in that most interesting volume translated and published by Mr. C.C. Massey⁹ from the third volume of Zöllner’s scientific treatises, called *Transcendental Physics*.¹⁰ Space in our journal absolutely precludes the possibility of our mentioning them. But in order to answer beforehand the well-known and trite objection that “any clever prestidigitator can do the same,” we will append extracts from two letters

¹ [Wilhelm Eduard Weber, 1804–1891, German physicist and, together with Carl Friedrich Gauss, inventor of the first electromagnetic telegraph. — *Wikipedia*.]

² *Transcendental Physics*, p. 18

³ [Josef Anton Maximilian Perty, 1804–1884, German naturalist, entomologist, and professor of zoology and comparative anatomy at the University of Bern. — *Wikipedia*.]

⁴ [Johann Heinrich Scheibler, 1705-1765]

⁵ [Zöllner]

⁶ [Gustav Theodor Fechner, 1801–1887, German experimental psychologist, philosopher, and physicist. An early pioneer in experimental psychology and founder of psychophysics, he inspired many 20th-century scientists and philosophers. He is also credited with demonstrating the non-linear relationship between psychological sensation and the physical intensity of a stimulus via a formula, which became known as the Weber–Fechner law. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

⁷ [Baron Lazar De Baczolay Hellenbach, 1827–1887, Hungarian philosopher whose numerous important works, including *Birth and Death* and *The Philosophy of Sound Common Sense* closely concern psychical research. In *Birth and Death*, which was translated into English in 1886, Hellenbach proposes the original idea that no change of world occurs at the moment of birth and death, except in the method of perception. In *The Philosophy of Sound Common Sense*, published in 1876, he tells the story of his psychical investigations. — Cf. *encyclopedia.com*]

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 18

⁹ [Charles Carlton Massey, 1838–1905, British barrister, Christian mystic, psychical researcher, founder and first president of the Theosophical Society in England, also a co-founder of the Psychical Research Society. After the Hogson Report, in which H.P. Blavatsky was described “as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history,” Massey resigned from the Theosophical Society.]

¹⁰ [*Transcendental Physics: an account of experimental investigations from the scientific treatises of Johann Carl Friedrich Zöllner*. Translated from the German with a preface and appendices, by Charles Carleton Massey. Boston: Colby & Rich, 1881; 2nd ed., 218pp]

here, from the same volume. These are the published confessions of two *jugglers of wide-known fame* — Messrs. Maskelyne¹ of London, and Samuel Bellachini,² Court conjurer at Berlin — who repeat that which the celebrated Robert-Houdin,³ the French conjurer, had already stated before; namely, that “levitations without contact as produced in the presence of mediums were feats utterly beyond the power of the *professional juggler*”; that it was “the work of *no human agency*, whatever else that agency might be.”⁴

Testimony of Juggler No. 1.

On the 1st July, 1873, Mr. Maskelyne writes in answer to a challenge from a Spiritualist who offered him £1000 if he could reproduce certain mediumistic phenomena, as follows:

In accepting this challenge, I wish you distinctly to understand *that I do not presume to prove* that such manifestations as those stated in the Report of the Dialectical Society *are produced by trickery* — *I have never denied that such manifestations are genuine*, but I contend that in them there is not one iota of evidence which proves that departed spirits have no better occupation than lifting furniture about. . . . I have never stated that you cannot produce some phenomena in a genuine manner. . . . [And in a third letter Mr. Maskelyne adds:] How *genuine* phenomena can be produced by trickery I am at a loss to know.⁵

There we have juggler No. 1, confessing that there is such a thing as *genuine* phenomena.

Testimony of Juggler No. 2.

In an official document, Samuel Bellachini, the prestidigitator and Court conjurer to His Majesty the Emperor [238] William I of Germany, certifies over his signature and those of two witnesses to the following:

I must, for the sake of truth, hereby certify that the phenomenal occurrences with Mr. Slade have been thoroughly examined by me with the minutest observation and investigation of his surroundings, including the table, and that I have *not in the smallest degree* found anything to be produced by means of prestidigitative manifestations, or by mechanical apparatus; and that any explanation of the experiments which took place *under the circumstances and*

¹ [John Nevil Maskelyne, 1839–1917, English stage magician and inventor of the pay toilet, along with other Victorian-era devices. He worked with magicians George Alfred Cooke and David Devant, and many of his illusions are still performed today. His book *Sharps and Flats: A Complete Revelation of the Secrets of Cheating at Games of Chance and Skill* is considered a classic overview of card sharp practices. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

² [Bellachini, 1827–1885, born Samuel Berlach in Prussia, officer in the Prussian service and one of the most popular conjurers in Prussia. — Cf. *Magipedia*.]

³ [Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, 1805–1871, French watchmaker, magician and illusionist, widely recognized as the father of the modern style of conjuring. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

⁴ [By changing his polarity at will, the Yogi can defy gravity. Likewise, alternating changes of polarity operate in the bird while ascending or dropping, and maintenance of the same polarity while sailing at any given altitude. Refer to article by Madame Blavatsky on “THE MYSTERY OF LEVITATION,” republished in “The Voice of the Will is the Atomic Point,” p. 109, in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

⁵ Given in the Appendices of *Transcendental Physics*, pp. 263, 264, 265

conditions then obtaining by any reference to prestidigitation, to be *absolutely impossible*.

It must rest with . . . men of Science . . . to search for the explanation of this phenomenal power, and to prove its reality. I declare, moreover, the published opinions of laymen as to the “How” of this subject to be premature, and according to *my* view and experience, false and one-sided. This, my declaration, is signed and executed before a notary and witnesses.

(Signed) SAMUEL BELLACHINI¹

Berlin, 6th December, 1877

And that makes juggler No. 2.

These two documents, added to the testimony of the several eminent men of science, ought to settle the “to be, or not to be” of the reality of the phenomena whatever the agency which produces them. If we cannot yet sufficiently prove what it is, there is some consolation to know *what it is not*: it is neither supernatural, divine nor diabolic. And if it is neither and the evidence in favour of its objective reality rests on such a scientific testimony, then the sooner the public and its *âme damnée* — the press — cease to sneer at and hiss it, the better for both — in future. Until then, to those who oppose and point the finger of scorn at the Spiritualists and Theosophists we will remark that they are quite welcome to call us names in words and even in print. In the words of a Spiritualist — a very dear lady friend of ours — addressed to a sneering sceptic last year, at Šimla:

There is real comfort in the thought that while you only *believe us* — we *know* you to be FOOLS.



¹ *op. cit.*, pp. 260-61

The scientific basis of Spiritualism.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (10), July 1881, p. 225. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF SPIRITUALISM) III pp. 239-40.

Having already¹ borne testimony to the admirable moral qualities and intellectual endowments of our lamented friend, the late Epes Sargent, it would almost suffice for us to announce the appearance of his crowning psychological work, *The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism*,² to give our readers an idea of its merits. From the beginning to the close of Mr. Sargent's busy literary life, whatever he did was well done. Though a man of strong convictions, he yet showed throughout an earnest determination to state his case fairly and without offensive combativeness — a talent we honestly envy. He became a Spiritualist only under the pressure of hard facts that he could not explain away, and since then has been jotting down for reference instead of merely seeing and forgetting like many others, the proofs that Spiritualism offers to the man of science, that it is worth investigating. The fruits of this methodical industry have, as we stated in our recent notice of his death, been given to the world in the form of three of the most useful books upon the subject. Mr. Sargent had no feeling of antagonism to Theosophy. With many enlightened Spiritualists he expressed his entire readiness to join us when he should be convinced of the Theosophical theory of the mediumistic phenomena by as unanswerable proofs as those which had made him what he was. And, as from the nature of things, these proofs were not available outside the closed circle of Asiatic mystics whom he could not visit, he took up an [240] attitude of friendly yet neutral good will, maintaining correspondence to the last with his Theosophical friends.

In his *Scientific Basis*, Mr. Sargent makes such an array of both logic and phenomena as to silence, if not convince, the sceptical man of science who would sneer mediumism down as a sort of child's play for servant girls and schoolboys. It is a book to be thought over as well as read by every real student of Psychology. We commend it most heartily to such, notwithstanding that, from having been more favoured than the lamented author with opportunities to learn the real cause of the mediumistic phenomena, we differ with him as to the necessary agency therein of the spirits of the dead. Messrs. Colby and Rich, the publishers, will accept our thanks for the copy of the work we have received.³

¹ p. 139, Vol. II

² [Boston: Colby & Rich, Publishers, No. 9 Montgomery Place, 1881; 2nd ed., 372pp]

³ [Refer to biographical notes by Boris de Zirkoff, at the end of this document.]

Biographical Notes by Boris de Zirkoff.

Alexander Mikhailovich Butlerov

Renowned Russian chemist, founder of the so-called “Butlerov School,” born August 25th / September 6th, 1828, at Chistopol’, Province of Kazan’; died August 5th / 17th, 1886, on his estate of Butlerovka in the same Province. He was the son of a lieutenant-colonel of modest means and was educated at home and in the Gymnasium of Kazan’, before entering the physio-mathematical department of the Kazan’ University. His unusual capacities resulted in a rapid progress in his studies and a generous recognition on the part of his teachers. His University appointed him to its Staff to teach chemistry and physical geography. In 1854 he became Doctor of Chemistry at Moscow University and was retained there to teach Chemistry. During three separate trips abroad, Butlerov spent considerable time studying the progress of chemistry in Europe, and establishing personal relations with a number of outstanding scientists, such as Bunsen, Kekule, and others. His scientific research laid the foundation of chemistry in Russia and coincided with the first marked development of organic chemistry in Europe.

It is of special interest to students of Theosophy to note his intense interest in Spiritualistic and allied phenomena. He became versed in the subject and approached it from the purely scientific viewpoint. On his initiative, there was organized in St. Petersburg in 1871 the first scientific Committee for the investigation of mediumistic phenomena, which included Professors Ovsyannikov, Chebishev, and Zion. He was also very active in the formation of another Committee for the same purpose, suggested by Prof. Mendelejev and made up of members of the Physical Society at the University of St. Petersburg. He was a constant contributor to the Spiritualistic journal *Rebus* for which H.P. Blavatsky wrote. His articles on the general subject of mediumship and psychic manifestations were published at St. Petersburg in 1889, with reminiscences by his life-long friend and co-worker, Prof. N.P. Wagner.¹

Epes Sargent

American author, born at Gloucester, Mass., September 27th, 1813. Educated chiefly at the Boston Latin School, which he entered at the age of nine. Although matriculated at Harvard College, he did not remain for graduation. When a boy, accompanied his father upon an extended trip to Russia, where he spent much time studying various collections of paintings. Upon his return, he started a small weekly paper, the *Literary Journal*, in which he gave an account of his experiences in Russia. From that time on, he devoted himself to literature. His first contributions appeared in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. For a while, he associated himself with S.G. Goodrich in the

¹ Biographical Notes by Boris de Zirkoff, from his *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* (BIBLIOGRAPHY) I pp. 448-49.

preparation of the *Peter Parley Books*. In 1836 he wrote for Josephine Clifton a five-act play entitled *The Bride of Genoa*, followed the next year by the tragedy *Velasco*, both plays being successfully produced. In 1837, Sargent became connected with the *Boston Atlas*, as Washington correspondent. In 1839, he took charge for a while of the New York *Mirror*, but returned to Boston, 1846, where he edited for several years *The Evening Transcript*. He established himself at Roxbury, and after a few years withdrew from newspaper life and engaged exclusively in literary pursuits. It is during this period that he wrote a number of children's books, some of which reached a large sale. In 1852, he produced the *Standard Speaker*, a work of rare completeness which passed through thirteen editions within three years. He also prepared excellent readers for public schools, which had an enormous sale. He also continued to produce some plays, such as *The Priestess*, with great success. In 1849, Sargent published a collection of poems under the title of *Songs of the Sea*, some of which were set to music. He was on terms of intimacy with Henry Clay and wrote a life of that distinguished statesman. He was well known as a lecturer throughout New England, and counted among his close friends some of the famous men of the day, such as Daniel Webster and others.

Epes Sargent wrote a number of novels, such as: *Wealth and Worth* (1840) ; *Fleetwood, or the Stain of a Birth* (1845), and others; among his poems, there is a lyrical one called *Life on the Ocean Wave*, beginning with the stirring line, "Oh, ye keen breezes from the Salt Atlantic." He also published *American Adventures by Land and Sea* (1847, 2-vols.); *Original Dialogues* (1861); and edited several memoirs.

Sargent's interest in spiritual subjects is fully dealt with in H.P. Blavatsky's article on pages 239-40 of the present volume, wherein she speaks of his work entitled *The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism* (2nd ed., Boston: Colby & Rich, 1881; 6th ed., 1891). In an unsigned note, possibly by H.P. Blavatsky or by Col. Olcott, inserted in *The Theosophist* (Vol. II, March 1881, p. 139), reporting the death of this remarkable man, which took place at Boston, December 31st, 1880, and in which is acknowledged a donation by Sargent of some of his school books to the Theosophical School for boys at Point de Galle, Ceylon, it is also stated that:

. . . there was something so sweet and winsome in his tone, expression of face and sentiments; such candour and evident devotion to what was good and true; and withal such a dignified purpose to act up to his light and his convictions, that for him to make an acquaintance was to secure a friend.

This is followed by a quotation from the Boston *Transcript* which praises Sargent in a genuine way.

It is also stated in *The Theosophist* that Sargent:

. . . was the author of various books of education which possess such superior merit that Mr. Jayasekara, Manager of our Galle school, declares them better than any English series he has even seen. A *Cyclopædia of Poetry* upon which he had been engaged for some years, was completed only about a month before his death.

Mention is also made of two other works by Sargent, namely, *Planchette* and *Proof Palpable of Immortality*, on subjects of grave concern in those days.

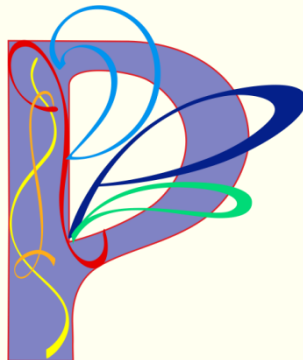
All in all, Epes Sargent was a man of sterling qualities, and apparently was in contact with the Founders by correspondence.¹

Nikolai Petrovich Wagner

Russian zoologist, born at Kazan, 1829, Son of Prof. of Kazan University; educated at 2nd gymnasium of native city; graduated with gold medal from the University of Kazan, 1849, as natural scientist. Taught natural history at Nizhny-Novgorod. Lectured at Kazan University, 1852; became Doctor of Natural Sciences at Moscow University, 1854. Abroad, 1858–1859; then in Moscow, editing the *Journal* of the Moscow Society of Rural Economy; full professor of Zoology at Kazan University, 1862; edited *Scientific Notes* of Kazan University, 1861–1864; conducted zoological research in Crimea, 1863; Professor of Zoology, University of St. Petersburg, 1871; made several trips abroad, 1865–1879. Wrote numerous natural science papers in various Journals, and edited for some years the scientifico-artistic journal *Svyet*. Also wrote work entitled *Tales of Kot-Murlika*, which became very popular, going through many editions, and a novel, *Temniy Put'* (1890).

Showed great interest in research concerning unconscious psychic functions of man and mediumistic phenomena, and in 1891 became President of the Russian Society of Experimental Psychology. He died in 1907.

H.P. Blavatsky translated into English Wagner's articles concerning séances with French medium Brédif (See the short-lived *Spiritual Scientist*, Boston, Mass., June 3rd, 10th and 17th, 1875).²



¹ Biographical Notes by Boris de Zirkoff, from his *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* (BIBLIOGRAPHY) III pp. 528-30.

² *ibid.*, (BIBLIOGRAPHY) VI p. 449.

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