

RUSTLINGS
IN
THE GOLDEN CITY:

Being a record of Spiritualistic Experiences
in Ballarat and Melbourne.

By JAMES CURTIS.

"It [Spiritualism] demonstrates mind without brain, and intelligence disconnected from a material body.... It furnishes proof of a future life which so many crave, and for want of which so many live and die in anxious doubt, so many in positive disbelief."—A. R. Wallace.

[Excerpt of the first 165 pages]

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The text has not been professionally proofed and experience shows that works of this vintage are likely to have more than a few errors compared to recent works.

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"Gently as drops the feather
From the swan's breast, your dust, ye weary hearted,
Shall from you fall, and none shall ask you whether
Ye feared or hoped. Each rankling wound that smarted
Shall pain no more, for peace dwells with the world's departed."
—*Lyric of the Golden Age.*

"This book cannot be slain
'Twill live, 'twill walk the world, and wing the air,
Surviving every pompous priestly fane
The weary Earth groans under, loth to bear.
Dear shall it be to Maidens; it shall lie
On the chaste altars of their purest bliss
Read with a throbbing heart and glowing eye
And sweet and sacred as Love's troth-plight kiss.
Dear shall it be to Lovers; like a lamp
With crimson radiance, rose-perfumed and fed,
That guides from Earth's low caverns, drear and damp,
To where, in Heaven, true hearts are angel-wed."
—*Lyric of the Morning Land.*

"Light as a leaf they step, or arrowy
Floating of breeze upon a waveless pool;
Sudden and soft, too, like a wave of light,
The beautiful immortals come to me."—*Festus.*

"Not one life shall he destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God bath made His pile complete."
"If we could but once a year exchange two words with our loved
and lost, death would be no longer death."—*Renan.*

"Whoever believes that he has something to teach us concerning
our destiny and our end, should be welcome."—*Renan.*

"Notwithstanding my age, and my exemption from the
controversies of the day, I feel it my duty to bear testimony to the
great fact of Spiritualism. No one should keep silent."
—*I. H. Fichte.*

"Were one world in the universe a hell,
Were one soul in the universe a fiend,
Damned hopelessly to everlasting pain,
'Twould be the torturing atom that inflames
The vision. Every world and every sphere
Would weep in woeful sympathy with woe.
The consciousness of all created life
Would yearn and grieve and anguish. God Himself,
Who, in the universal consciousness,
Dwells throned and radiant, would receive no joy,
But only grief from His fair universe.

—*Lyric of the Golden Age.*

"The argument that nothing ever came
From Spirits or the Spiritual World
Is very ancient. The Philosopher
Said to the Seer, 'All that you see I know.'
The Seer, in his deep wisdom, made reply,
'All that you know I see.'"

—*Lyric of the Golden Age.*

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INTRODUCTION

The first issue of "Rustlings," in 1886; was for private circulation only, and printed in sections, some of the later chapters before the earlier, hence the irregularities in paging, repetitions in introductory matter, etc.

The chapters, when issued singly, were for the members of a Circle formed in Ballarat for enquiring into the truth or otherwise of alleged phenomena of Spiritualism. When the consecutive parts were collated, they formed a book of 280 pages, and about 300 complete copies got into circulation.

There has been no alteration in the substance of the matter since the former issue. Some typographical and literary corrections have been effected, verbal changes made, and a few small additions supplemented.

Endeavour has been made throughout to literally express the phenomena just as they occurred; and the oral portions reported as accurate as circumstances permitted.

This edition (the third) has been prepared for publication by Mr. J. J. Morse, who regrets to announce the passing away of Mr. Curtis during the preparation of these pages for the press.

PREFACE.

THIS little volume literally teems with records of spiritual manifestation.

During about three months at the end of the year 1883, I was disabled and almost confined to my house, when I gathered together numerous manuscripts of spiritualistic literature, which had been written from time to time and accumulated to a considerable mass, and from which has been selected the matter contained in the following chapters.

The records were mostly reports written at private seances with trance, clairvoyant, materialising, and other mediums, in Ballarat principally, and in Melbourne.

In my possession were also copies of spirit writings and notes made at or immediately after the meetings of a small circle of ladies and gentlemen, to which I had attached myself. This circle held periodical weekly meetings, continuing about seven years. Phenomena were seldom absent, and which consisted of considerable variety. Most of the members were more or less mediumistic, and the circle was rich specially in trance communications and spirit writings.

Some time after my literary work was finished, and the physical disability removed, I received a request from a spirit, who had been nigh two thousand years in Summer

land, and with whom I had been in frequent communion, that I would not yet publish the book. The control further intimated that many of the communications of the twelfth chapter were not intended for the public but for me, and were given for my own instruction, and for assisting me in gaining knowledge of the spiritual spheres, etc.

At the time I received this communication, some of the chapters had already been published. The matter contained in Chapter III, was printed in an issue of the *Ballarat Courier* daily newspaper, circulating over seven thousands copies daily; and Chapter IV and V were published in a London periodical; whilst other parts were made use of in the compilation of lectures, newspaper correspondence, and so on.

I understood the control had no intention of suggesting that the matter should not be privately read, therefore I struck out a portion of the written copy of the twelfth chapter (such parts as I supposed the spirit referred to) and, after the MSS. had lain by two or three years, had produced a small edition for private circulation amongst friends only.

The medium of the twelfth chapter, Miss Milne, died on the 25th January, 1890—*Vide Addendum*, "In Memoriam." She was of a retiring nature, and did not like her name to appear in any public manner, but was quite content to be known under a *nom de plume*, as in the issue for private circulation.

Mons. Renan is credited with expressing, "If we could but once a year exchange two words with our loved and lost, death would be no longer death."

If the modest total of "two words" but "once a year" from our "loved and lost" could really be of such great value to humanity, what then should be the thousand-fold enhanced worth of a whole volume of well-attested messages from "our loved and lost?"

I can well remember periods in my own life when even if such small mercies as "two words" had been vouchsafed from "lost" ones, much keen and heavy anguish would have been lifted from a sorrowing heart, and sweet anticipation of re-union would perhaps have filled the place occupied by deadening uncertainty and sorrow. For the sake, then, of others—of those who have lost and received no tidings—I purpose unfolding within these covers a portion of what has been so extraordinarily unbosomed to me, some parts of which I believe to be unique.

The same scholarly Frenchman, just quoted, further said, "Whosoever believes that he has something to teach us concerning our destiny and our end should be welcome." If the communications herein from the great spirit worlds may be relied upon, and I believe they may, then much—very much—"concerning our destiny and our end" may be found; for there are within these pages golden words from over the great sea of "death," from which may literally be gathered up a great deal that will, if I am not mistaken, give more than a "clue" to our destiny, and also unfold something of the nature and employments of life beyond the grave.

One of the ancient spirits said to me "It is a glorious work to show to mortals that they are immortal." Is it not then a duty to offer what evidence one can of the reality of

the future life? Willingly do I bear testimony that friends, who were supposed to be dead, have shown themselves under various circumstances. In my own room, no other mortal being near, the immortals were present, and both seen and felt.

That all mankind are inherently immortal have been the iterated teachings from spirits of the spheres of from recent date on Earth to several thousand years back, as distinctly shown herein.

The spirit Annie, whose personality intertwines almost every leaf of this book, once wrote to me thus: "Oh, dear one, you are immortal, and must ever regard yourself as the child of the Great Immortal Father, through whose laws, which are divine, thou hast had given to thee the germs of everlasting life. Thou canst by no act of thine throw away thy birthright, nor sell it to another. It is yours; and no law or judgment can take it from thee."

"Am I to live after my body is dead?" queried M.A. (Oxon). "Then it concerns me to know where. What answer comes to me from beyond?"

April, 1890

After a dozen copies of the first issue of this volume had been supplied to the Members of the Circle referred to in the body of the work, I received the following letter from Mr. W. P. Bechervaise, post-master and telegraph manager, Ballarat, with a desire that it should be printed and issued with the delivery of each book. It is here reproduced:—

"To the Reader.—When I state that I was highly favoured in receiving an invitation with my friend, Mr.

James Curtis, to the first meeting, referred to in Chapter II, on 17th of May, 1878, and that (until I was removed to Melbourne) I regularly attended the Investigating Circle as Chairman, it will be readily understood that I have carefully perused every page of this little volume and, having done this much, I now desire to say that the reading of the matter before me has unfolded a sense of continued pleasure, not only owing to its strictly truthful statements, but also to the graphic descriptions of the many grand and beautiful scenes of Spirit Life in the Spheres.

"I witnessed, and therefore bear testimony to the almost extremely sceptical state of mind that the author of 'RUSTLINGS' exhibited during the first few months of our Studies of Spiritualistic Phenomena; and only by degrees, little by little, would he give way as the numerous positive and repeated proofs presented themselves of the fact of our holding commune with the denizens of the Spirit Spheres, who were with us at every sitting. Both the author and myself, and also the other members of the band of enquirers, received from our relatives and friends who had I passed on evidences too plain to admit of doubt, such as that we could not but acknowledge them, because, in fact, to reject proof would have disgraced our common intelligence.

"I am, day by day, ever thankful for the privileges I now enjoy in having thus gained a knowledge of the existence and nature of the great Spirit World over the Borderland. It is also a pleasing reflection that I have been able to throw off much of the valueless theology, so contrary to fact, in which I was educated; and to reverentially

acknowledge one Great Father of All, and cultivate a love and sympathy with all creation; religion consisting of high and holy aspirations, and of righteous actions towards every human being with whom we come in contact.

The knowledge that we are able, under suitable conditions, to converse sweetly with those who are already 'over there,' and that we shall certainly be again fully reunited on a higher plane of existence to those who are so dear to us, are treasures worth to its possessors more than the gain of worlds of wealth.

Mr. Curtis has given a faithful record of spirits writing on slates at Dr. Slade's *seances* in the Circle, and also of the other matters which he has taken cognizance of at our meetings at which I was present.

I conclude that should other harmonious individuals at any time be led on to follow our example and persistently search, as the noble Bereans of old did, evidences of the reality of the spirit world at hand will not be wanting; and they will then bless the day they ever read this book, and my few straggling remarks corroborative of much of its contents.

"The poet, Milton, acknowledges that he was guided by spirits. One, whom he calls Urania, was his constant attendant. More than once he speaks of her, and thus writes in his 'Paradise Lost':—

"Of my celestial patroness, who deigns.
Her nightly visitations unimplored,
And *dictates to me* slumbering, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse."

Ballarat,
June 28, 1890.

"WM. PHILIP BECHERVAISE."

CHAPTER I.

BALLARAT, "THE GOLDEN CITY."

WHEN writing this volume of "RUSTLINGS," with a view of publication in London, a chapter of some length was prepared under the above heading. The intention of public issue was modified (*vide preface*), and an edition was printed for private circulation only, the distribution of which would be mostly amongst friends in the colony of Victoria, and therefore almost superfluous for me to attempt to convey information about the gold-producing centre to those who knew, perhaps, as much as I did of its numerous gold-bearing quartz lodes and deposits of the precious metal in the alluvium, its geology, geographical position, climate, growth of population, civic institutions, public buildings, its streets and arboriculture, lake and gardens, art gallery, school of mines, its nomenclature, etc. A condensed literary ramble in these fields of observation might have formed a suitable introductory chapter, but which must still be abandoned, as I have included more matter than I originally intended in the remaining chapters.

Although such an introduction (namely, a very brief

history of Ballarat) might have very little to do with the subject in hand, yet part of the title of this work receives its symbolism from "The Golden City," as it is so commonly termed; and the figure of speech might need this explanation for readers other than Australian.

Now, I shall but just barely refer to Ballarat, showing how and when I arrived there. In the last month of the year 1926 I was born in Fordingbridge, a town in Hampshire, in a house adjoining a somewhat ancient bridge, celebrated in back history, its seven arches spanning the river Avon. The western walls of my father's house were within five yards of its flowing stream. The Avon (the Wiltshire and Hampshire Avon) takes its rise in about the central part of Wiltshire, and, gathering in its course sixty tributary streams, runs through Amesbury, Salisbury, Downton, Fordingbridge, Ringwood, and Christchurch, joining the English Channel at the last-named town. Fordingbridge, bordering on the New Forest, was called by the British (A.D. about 500) Godeu-Bridge-Caer-leon, meaning the city of the legion, or King Arthur's city, as it was here he was first crowned A.D. 511. It was also the headquarters in A.D. 506 of the celebrated General Ambrosius. The great battle of (or for) Achren, or the battle of Godeu, was fought A.D. 508, the British defending the bridge and the city against the Saxons, led by Cerdic and Cymric—nearly 400 British nobles and 5,000 men fell in the conflict. [*See History of Fordingbridge; Cymric in Hants; Camden's Britannica, and Green's History.*]

I left my native town in March, 1849, arriving in

Adelaide, South Australia, a few months later, after a long and tedious voyage. In the month of February, 1851, I was in the German barque, the *Dochenhuden*, from Adelaide to Port Phillip and Sydney; the only other English passenger was Mr. John Francis, late editor and proprietor of the *Creswick Advertiser* newspaper. We were both compositors, and landed in Melbourne. I went to Geelong, my fellow-passenger closely followed, when we were engaged on one of the two newspapers of the town. In August, the same year, the discovery of gold was made in Buninyong, and Golden Point, Ballarat. Man on horseback was then the speediest means of communication between the locality of the gold-diggings and Geelong, fifty-four miles apart. These conveyed what may be termed the telegrams of the day. My companion and I put most of the paragraphs relating to the discovery of gold in type, and then was first published news that helped to give a fresh start to the modern era of civilisation. Geelong had the advantage of being several hours nearer the gold-field than Melbourne. All our men caught the gold fever. We closed our printing establishment, started for Ballarat in diggers' costumes, and erected our canvas tent near Golden Point. Our division totalled eight men, all of whom but Mr. Frederic Scott, of the *Ararat Advertiser*, and myself, are now "numbered with the dead." I remained then but few weeks on the gold-fields, working hard without being included among the successful ones. Rules for our general guidance, or something akin to a deed of partnership, was drawn up and signed. This document

is dated September, 1851, and is in the possession of Mr. A. T. Morrison, mayor of this city in 1879-80 and 1884-85, son of Mr. Alexander Morrison, the last-named gentleman being one of our eight, and proprietor of the *Victorian Colonist* newspaper, on which we were all engaged, in Geelong.

I left Ballarat, lived in Melbourne and nearly ten years: returned to England in 1861, was, a constant visitor to the Kensington Exhibition of 1862 then voyaged back to Victoria, commencing business in Ballarat the first month of 1863, and remained a citizen of the "Golden Metropolis" till the present time, 1896.

Over £250,000,000 worth of gold has been obtained in the colony of Victoria since the discovery in 1851, and Ballarat claims a very large share in this production.

I set a very *high value* on the knowledge I have gained of the future life; and if an alternative could be presented to me of being the owner of unlimited gold, or the possessor of the information contained in this book, I could not—would not—but choose the latter.

CHAPTER II.

THE INVESTIGATING CIRCLE.

Let me add this, that to abandon the phenomena [of Spiritualism] to credulity is to commit a treason to human reason."—Victor Hugo.

A FEW gentlemen were invited to meet together on the evening of the 17th May, 1878, in the business premises of a tradesman in the City of Ballarat, their primal object being the discussion of the desirability or otherwise of instituting a "Circle of Members for Enquiry into the Nature of the alleged Phenomena of Spiritualism."

Each, whose attendance was solicited, promptly appeared, and the business, *pro et con* [for and against], on the subject in hand was fully ventilated.

'With a single exception, no gentleman had had any experience in Spiritualistic seances.

My own knowledge of Spiritualism extended but little beyond that which I had gathered from reading newspaper articles and paragraphs, mostly sarcastic and antagonistic, and a volume entitled, "Startling Facts on Modern Spiritualism," by Dr. Wolff.

The outcome of the deliberation of the little assembly was an agreement that no great harm could be done by having a few meetings together to "see if there be anything in it."

One gentleman said he had no objection to "sitting," but he gave no credence to spiritual manifestations of any kind. Another thought that, in order to avoid "wasting time," the limitation of meetings should be fixed so as to include but one or two months only whilst I expressed myself that if the verity of Communion with Spirits could be absolutely proved, a once-a-week *seance* for a year would not be too long for the investigation contemplated, and the bare chance of success would be worth an extended trial.

The length of time could not be agreed on but, one of the gentlemen having offered the use of his drawing-room, it was arranged that the first circle meeting should be held on the next coming Wednesday evening at eight o'clock.

Two or three of those present, although expressing themselves favourably towards the success of the experiment to be tried, preferred to await results outside the immediate circle to be formed, and each gave reasons excusing himself taking instant, active part.

At the first meeting for investigation there were about a dozen members—ladies and gentlemen—present, who, sat around a large mahogany circular-top table without obtaining any noticeable results except that several experienced tingling sensations in their arms, and betrayed sundry eccentric movements with their hands over the surface of the table—movements which each expressed were both involuntary and uncontrollable during the short time they lasted.

At the second meeting, a larger number of members were present. A chairman was chosen; a few simple

rules adopted for general guidance and it was resolved that the meetings for investigation be held twice in each week. Every *seance* was to be opened by the President repeating the "Lord's Prayer," followed by the other members in the same manner as that observed in Church of England congregations; and chanting the "Doxology" to be considered the *finale* to each assembly. Nothing further noteworthy occurred at this meeting beyond similar manifestations to those experienced at the previous gathering

It has already been intimated that there was but one gentleman amongst us who had practical knowledge concerning the manner in which spiritual communications were obtained. This member had been connected with a private investigating circle in Melbourne, and had there discovered himself to be a "writing medium." Both before and after the circle meetings were formally commenced and closed, he wrote answers to questions put by individual members, and the replies were regarded by the questioners as quite satisfactory.

The manner of obtaining this kind of spirit-writing is thus:—The writer sits passively with pencil in hand; presently, two or three involuntary raps with the pencil on the paper before him indicate "ready," when the calligraphy commences and continues, sometimes with remarkable rapidity, without stopping, on to the end; the communications or answers to questions varying in length from a few words to two or three folios of closely-written foolscap. About a year after the starting of this little assembly, I began occasionally to sit alone with this involuntary-writing member, and sometimes obtained in a

quarter-of-an-hour written messages which occupied, under ordinary circumstances, an hour to copy. Some of the results of these sittings will be given in a future chapter.

At our third meeting the arm of a young lady member frequently became involuntarily agitated, and a method was observed in some of the strange movements; and words and sentences, with the help of the alphabet, were slowly "rapped" out—the process, however, being rather tedious. Neither the hand-rapping nor the hand-writing were then quite satisfactory to me. A clever person, I thought, *might* himself perform the rapping or the writing but one could see that such an individual must be not only clever but *exceedingly* adroit to write as he frequently did my innermost thoughts. If I really expected phenomena, those which I witnessed were so unlike what I had conceived manifestations of spirit to be, that I dared not accept them as such, granting there were in nature, outside of mortals, exhibitions of spirit-controlling character. I could not mistrust the sincerity and truthfulness of any of my associates, who were all regarded as highly respectable trustworthy citizens; but it was hard to understand these abnormal and crude agitations which were, so constantly occurring around the table, although several times I felt strange sensations in my right arm compelling me, much to the astonishment of myself and the others, to vehemently belabour the table. None of these attacks continued longer than a few seconds, but I could not prevent their occurrence and re-occurrence, so suddenly did the feeling and impulse overtake me.

I closely watched the process of what is termed "spirit-writing," or rather this particular exhibited phase of it,

and also the outcome of the questions and answers. Most of the members apparently found great interest in this means of gaining information from their "departed" friends. It was not easy to chase from my mind the idea that in some way or other I might be deceived or deceiving myself, therefore I became vigilant, guarding against the chances of reason and judgment being swayed or biased by appearances only. No one, however, without help from some source of information outside himself, could write as our member did. How the intelligence was obtained and its manipulation accomplished were questions that persistently clung to me, and which I could not satisfactorily answer.

At the fourth *seance*, after the usual formalities and sitting about fifteen or twenty minutes with Quaker-like gravity and stillness, waiting for the "moving of the spirit," a lady member became suddenly "in trance." This seemed a little alarming to some of us; but a thoughtful member explained that there was no danger to be apprehended to the entranced one; and each person was enjoined to sit quietly and keep his, or her mind and body easy. The admonition seemed to be the correct thing, inasmuch as the lady continued her bodily position upright, her eyelids closed, her face pale but highly serene and intelligent.

This lady, whom I shall in further references denominate the "Medium" of the circle (not because there were no other mediumistic members, since several subsequently became sensitive to spiritual perceptions), for some time exhibited no other immediate movements than twitchings round about her mouth; but after a while, in a low,

tone of voice, sometimes scarcely above a whisper, commenced and continued to speak and converse nearly an hour.

She said that a spirit by the name of George Wilson *controlled* and spoke through her organism and who stated lie had been in the spirit land about twelve years; that he had been a Presbyterian minister near Manchester, in England; and in the earthly life was intimately acquainted with the medium's brother, whom he quickly followed to the better land, and who was now immediately present by the side of his sister, the medium. Mr. Wilson further said, his own material body and that of his friend lie side by side in the same enclosure. They were firm friends whilst on earth, and still united together in loving spirit companionship in the Summerland, their thoughts, tastes, and feelings harmonising. It was through this brother that he had been attracted to the medium, and consequently to the circle. He was exceedingly gratified at being enabled to speak, and would come again and again and answer to the best of his knowledge and ability any questions that might be put to him by the members of the circle. All this and much more he made us to understand.

Mr. Wilson was not known to anyone in the circle; but all that he stated relative to his earthly life has since been verified.

The medium then came out of the trance condition, and in a few minutes was herself again. She stated that she knew nothing of what had taken place during the, interval between her becoming unconscious and returning to consciousness: it was to her a complete blank.

So far, this was encouraging to the circle. Minutes were recorded; but, as no member could write shorthand, only a very brief outline of what was said at this and some of the subsequent meetings is now extant.

I could not by any amount of cogitation understand much of the meaning or the end to be gained of all that taken place in the circle. I felt as if I were a distant spectator rather than an immediate participator narrowly watching all the events, and calmly waiting for what might turn up next. When my opinion was desired in reference to any manifestation that had taken place, I declined giving any decided judgment, preferring to wait; hence for many months I was spoken of in the circle as the "doubting member," notwithstanding that I had received many striking proofs, perhaps more than any other of our associative band, both in and out of the circle, of the unmistakable identity of those whom I had mourned as "lost" returning to the earth; and also of the truth and reality of spirit-communion. I needed to be doubly and trebly certain before proclaiming adhesion to a cause the philosophy and manifestations of which were so opposed to life-long notions and deeply-rooted prejudices.

At the next and succeeding seances the medium, as previously, became unmistakably entranced. Some of the members stated that they could often observe shadowy outlines resembling human form near to themselves and moving about the room. Lights of much beauty were described as seen by two or three, but unseen by myself and others. The spirit George Wilson generally, and other spirits occasionally, controlled the medium,

Questions were answered by the spirits in excellent feeling taste, and language. Addresses on philosophical, theological, and other subjects, often in reply to queries, were spoken in choice diction; and ideas were sometimes, expressed in opposition to the known views of the medium, and unlike the opinions (if the questioning members.

At most of the meetings, now held, the medium described to the members, each in turn, their spirit relatives and friends that were said to be present and near to every one of them.

As every member was individually spoken to, each seemed, from the vivid description given, to recognise the presence of the "departed." There were no members alone; all had their spirit friends agreeably near. Messages—loving messages—were frequently given, which should, at least, have had the effect of conveying pleasure to each believer and recipient. These communications intimated that they came from the encircling band who were at our elbows, their spirit hands resting on our, shoulders, and their forms leaning over and upon us.

The "ministry of spirits" seemed to be, or seemed likely to be, established. Spirits were said to be surrounding us like a "cloud of, witnesses," testifying to us that our friends whom we had supposed to be dead were absolutely alive, and anxious to communicate with those who were dear to them on this material terra.

The descriptions given by or through the medium of the spirits who were mentioned as being close to me, of course, arrested my keenest attention. The verbal delineations were so obvious that there was no difficulty in

acknowledging to myself that the spoken portraits were striking resemblances of some whom I had formerly known so well. It is not only improbable but may be granted impossible that the medium could have had the remotest knowledge, or the normal means of knowing anything, of those she so accurately described.

Names of the spirits present were not always given by the medium. Sometimes they were suggested by the members themselves, when the medium replied, "your friend" or "the spirit responds to that name," or "does not respond," as the case might have been. Many people complain of the difficulty of getting proper names from the spirit world. This is more especially the case when numbers of persons are present at *seances*, but there are, no doubt, numerous reasons why communicating spirits do not always give their names at public or semi-public meetings.

The truth that I was so diligently seeking demanded numerous and searching tests, and I thought that watchful reticence, closely observing all the phenomena or manifestations as they occurred, was the proper method by which to obtain certainty in this delicate and really interesting and important matter which seemed to connect the material with the spirit worlds.

I tried hard to account for the remarkably mysterious power so fast developing, and the phases of spirit demonstration I had witnessed, on other grounds than those taken by Spiritualists. I sought literature opposed to Spiritualism and studied the many theories advanced to explain all the phenomena. The hypothesis brought forward, however, gave no satisfaction, and seemed to be merely the potions of those who had witnessed no spirit manifestations

in opposition to others who had. Mind-reading needed but little examination to comprehend its untenability, except it may be spirits reading the minds of their brethren in the flesh.

There was one of the attending spirits, who was said to be often near me, described by the medium night after night, and who seemed so persistent as if determined to be recognised. I could not then call to remembrance any one I had intimately known that agreed with the delineation given by the medium. I ransacked my memory to bring to recollection all my friends who had died from the time of my earliest years, and could find no one that corresponded to the verbal and minute portraiture. Several sittings then passed without any reference being made to this spirit, when again the medium described the young lady apparition as before. The medium continued, "she is now close beside you, and says she is surprised you do not recognise her. She was a visitor at your house, and stayed some time with you when she was ill. She knew you, too, when you were living in Geelong. You were fond of her when she was a child, and she was fond of you. She passed away almost suddenly at last. Her disease was consumption." All this was said by the medium in trance, and I did not yet recall the image depicted. Whoever she was, she seemed to be wholly gone from my memory. When the circle meeting, was over, I took a long strolling walk outside the city for the purpose of thinking alone about this spirit communicant. After about an hour, when I had just said to myself, "I cannot remember who she is; and will dismiss the whole affair from my mind," I was stopped as

suddenly as if I had been struck, and the name of the spirit vividly occurred to me; whilst a real or imagined presence held me as if rooted to the ground—I could not move. I laughed aloud at the oddity of my position, and then wondered at my late dullness of memory. I said nothing of this to any one. At the next meeting, the medium in trance after speaking to several members, addressing me, said "I see beside you the same spirit I described to you before. She says she is pleased you have not forgotten her, and knows that you have recognised her. She also mentions that her name is Lizzie Grave." Two of the members declared that they distinctly heard the name Lizzie Grave uttered in the room immediately before it was spoken by the medium.

No one in the circle but myself knew this young lady, nor had ever seen or heard of her previous to this meeting, when her name was heard over our heads and at the same moment articulated by the medium. What had been said of her in trance was quite true in all respects. She "departed" in Geelong, a town situated on Port Phillip Bay, about fifty-four miles from Ballarat.

All this, which I have attempted to describe, occurred, and much more also; but I could not yet acknowledge to the world that I was thoroughly convinced of the truth of Spiritualism. I have already intimated that I never for one moment saw any reason to doubt the uprightness and strictest integrity, of every member: and I could find no tenable, theory but Spiritualism which would account for the, manifestations which engaged our attention. I felt quite sure there was a power with us outside and beyond ourselves, and that that power was

able to control many of our actions. Almost every communication, both written and verbal, was in one way or another accompanied by reiterated assurances that the messages were directly from those who had lived in the body as we do now. Why then should strong prejudice prevent honest acknowledgment of these manifest facts? The whole seemed too good to be just meekly and kindly received and cherished; and I craved for further and still further kinds of evidence. I was determined to keep on the enquiry, neglecting no opportunity available within reach of additional and wider investigation; and chances favoured me more, perhaps, than I deserved. I followed on, meeting with overwhelming and indubitable evidences, some of which will be recorded in future chapters.

During these several months of investigation of spirit-presence at the circle, I had no private *seances* with mediums, nor any noteworthy events to chronicle beyond the manifestations at our meeting-place, except a little incident that happened two or three days previous to the first gathering of our little band.

A gentleman named Macmasters told me he had commenced to investigate the "mysteries of Spiritualism," and was willing and anxious to join the circle about to be formed. On the evening of the same day that he intimated his willingness to become a member I called at his house, and found him at home with his daughter, a girl about twelve or thirteen years of age. They were sitting at a table, and before them were large sheets of white paper and a planchette. My friends had been trying to obtain written intelligence by means of this little instrument, and were still busy with it when I

arrived. I closely watched the operation till they finished all they intended to do, when my host asked me if I would "try it" (the planchette). I said, Marguerite might for me: would she do me the favor? She said she would be much pleased to try. A sheet of white paper was then placed under the planchette. The young lady laid her hand lightly on the "magic board," the tips of the fingers of my right hand resting gently on hers, when all was ready for impulse and operation. My friend then asked (he seemed to be speaking to a vacuum), "Is there any spirit here who is related to, or acquainted with, Mr. Curtis?" The girl's arm immediately became agitated, and she wrote rapidly, "Yes, his mother is present." "Is there any other spirit wishing to write?" was the next query. The instant answer came, "Yes, his uncle John." I explained that I once had "two uncles John, which of these was now present?" Quick reply followed in the same manner as before; the planchette rapidly wrote in upside down characters, "His father's side."

This is very wonderful, I reflected, that a girl of thirteen not only gave me messages, but told me of a relative whom I had never seen, only heard of, and probably should never again have thought about, had not some incident or circumstance occurred to bring my father's brother to remembrance. My uncle John died about the time that I was born. I went away to my home in a thoughtful mood, and very much puzzled.

Our medium's principal controls were the Rev. George Wilson, before mentioned, and Dr. Macfarland. The latter stated that he had been about eighty years in

spirit-land, and had during his earthly life practised his profession at Fort Augustus, in Scotland. The style, language, and ideas of these two controls were widely diverse but never contradictory.

In some of the earliest trance communications one of the spirit band around the circle was well and truly described, and the likeness I recognised without effort; but as this one of the immortals will appear more or less prominent in almost every chapter, I have made but this single reference to her in this part of "RUSTLINGS."

It is not my intention to attempt to reproduce the numerous questions of the members, nor the replies thereto, nor any of the many and varied incidents which I might have transferred from the records of the circle in minute books kept by the secretary; but simply to re-write some of my own observations of phenomena which I jotted down in my own note books at the time of, or shortly after, their occurrence. A *verbatim* with descriptive report of a single evening's *seance* would be sufficient, sometimes, to fill a small volume.

Our circle persevered in holding *seances*, continuing regular meetings several months, when it was then suspected that the number of members was too large for the almost perfect harmony required for the best effects; and it was also thought it would be to the advantage of the whole to carry on investigations in two or more groups, and to meet, together at stated periods for the purpose of comparing, results, etc. These considerations were not, however, immediately acted on.

About this time, the end of August, Mr. Henry Slade, the Slate-writing Medium, arrived in Melbourne.

CHAPTER III.

TWO SITTINGS WITH MR. HENRY SLADE.

"And there came a writing from Elijah the prophet."—II. Chron. xxi. 12.

THE following was printed on September 3rd, 1878, in the *Ballarat Courier*, a newspaper circulating between 6000 and 7000 copies daily. I shall reproduce the matter almost word for word, except that now the genuine signatures to the communication will be given as they were autographically produced on slates; then, as I stated to the editor, I deemed it prudent to write fictitious names. The original messages, except those mentioned as wiped out with a wet sponge, are still intact and in my keeping.

To the Editor of the Courier.

SIR,—I do not desire, at present, to enter into any discussion either for or against Spiritualism, but simply try to write a report of what occurred during two seances, with Mr. Henry Slade, medium. The manifestations I shall presume were caused by spirits, as they purported to be; or, communications from people who have passed over from this life into that of another sphere.

Arriving in Melbourne by the mid-day train from Ballarat, I wended my way to Mr. Terry's house, No. 84

Russell Street, where I was introduced to Mr. Slade, and arranged to sit with him at half-past seven on the same evening.

A few minutes before the time agreed on I was waiting at the appointed place, Mr. Slade arrived a little later. We occupied one of Mr. Terry's rooms which measures about fourteen feet square, the place barely furnished with carpeted floor and sofa. The remainder of the furniture consisted of four cane-bottom chairs, and a polished square-top cedar table, for the use of Mr. Slade and his patrons.

There is no need to enter on any further description of the table, as its plainness and simplicity of construction has been already described in some of the Melbourne daily newspapers.

After carefully examining the room, the floor, the table, chairs, etc., I sat down at the table on its south side, whilst Mr. Slade took his seat at its west end. We put our hands in one heap the medium's overlapping mine. The room was as light as day, being illuminated with its fullest gas powers. Mr. Slade placed himself so that I could behold both his legs and feet, and in fact see him from head to toe.

Not more than half-a-minute had elapsed when I heard, several distinct raps close to me on the table.

The invisibles it seemed were present and the medium speaking, asked—"Will you write, for Mr. Curtis?" Three distinct raps were immediately given, which number of signals indicated "yes."

Mr. Slade then explained that the messages on slates were usually written by his wife, Mrs. A. W. Slade, who

had "gone over" to the spirit world. Communications direct from the personal friends of his patrons were more rare, and which he could not guarantee to produce neither could he be certain of obtaining slate-writing phenomena or any other kind of spiritual manifestations, although they generally came freely.

He then took up a common sixpenny school slate that was lying on the table, and which I had previously thoroughly examined, and placed on it a small piece of slate pencil about the size of a grain of rice. Then he held the slate partially under the corner of the table between himself and me, in his right hand, his left being still with mine over the top of the table. That portion of the slate standing out from under the table, and Slade's hand holding it by the frame, were both visible. The upper surface of the slate where the writing came was directly beneath the under surface of the table-board, the rim touching it.

Immediately, I distinctly heard a grating on the slate exactly like the noise produced by writing with slate pencil. Three raps on the table were given, which indicated. "finished" and when the slate was examined, three or four lines were found written across the page where the grain of pencil was laid.

The writing was not very distinct, but still quite readable. I did not then think of copying it, and the words were wiped off the slate with a wet sponge.

A second, writing, on the same slate, of greater number of words, was obtained in a similar manner, and which also was sponged off.

The next three or four lines were produced on my own

slate which I carried with me from Ballarat—a Faber's book-slate consisting of three lightly-framed leaves, or six writing pages, each about nine inches by five, enclosed within covers the inside could only be seen by opening as a book. This slate, or rather these slates, were in my close possession till the moment they were required for writing purposes, when Mr. Slade simply lifted the front cover and dropped inside on the first page a grain of pencil, closing up directly. This book-slate was held for a second or two, like those before-mentioned, partially under the table, when the medium's hand seemed as if forced with the slate on to and up my left arm to my shoulder and ear, when I heard the pencil commence writing, passing along a line of the slate, then back commencing and finishing a second line, and again a third line from one end of the page to the other.

Three raps on the slate on my shoulder meant "finished." I looked into the "Faber" and found the following words distinctly written:—

"You have many friends present who will try to write for you, and hope to please, and convince you of their presence."

This I at once copied in a pocket-book, when the original was effaced, as the, other messages, with a wet sponge.

Most of the writing, at this seance was done whilst the slates were resting on, my shoulder, dose; to the left ear, and the tiny pencil, or the unused portion thereof, was in every case found sticking as if glued to the finishing stroke of each communication. I distinctly heard every message written.

Again the seemingly simple-looking process of inter-communication

was repeated and resulted in the reception of the following little *billet-doux* [love notes]:—

"Oh, I am so happy to come in this way!—I am, Anne Beal."

The next and two following messages will speak for themselves as to their origin

"My dear Son,—I promised I would meet you here. I am, your loving mother, Elizabeth Curtis."

The promise here referred to was given to me through the medium of the circle at Ballarat.

"Never let a doubt enter your mind, for this is a truth. I am your loving mother, Elizabeth Curtis."

This was the sixth message from the world of spirits. "For this is a truth," refers to the fact of spirit-communion, as exemplified. The seventh:—

"I am happy to come to you. I am not able to do [write] more now. E. Curtis."

I suppose the magnetism supplied by myself and the medium, and which assisted in giving this spirit the force to connect herself with material objects, was, too much exhausted for her spirit power to continue to further utilise, therefore I judge that she gave way to another communicant who was yet able to successfully employ the influence or material which connects the worlds of matter and spirit.

The next letter I received, and which I still retain just as written by the spirit on thy own slate, reads thus:

"May God and his holy angels bless your soul.—Anne Beal."

Mr. Slade then put one of his own slates into my hands, and requested that some spirit would, write on it

whilst I held it. The slate became violently agitated as if alive, and two or three times all my strength was needed to retain its hold, when the invisible power almost lifted me bodily from the floor. No writing, however, came on this slate, but an answer to the request was given on my own "Faber"

"We can't do so now, but will develop him in a short time.—
Anne B."

I have kept this message, and also the two following, just as written.

"Much goodwill come to you for coming here. We can do no more [writing] for you.—Anne Beal."

On the last page of my Faber's book-slate, before starting on the journey to Melbourne, I pinned to the frame, and entirely covered from sight, a small coil of hair that was cut from Anne Beal's head when she died in Southampton, in 1850. On the same page, below the hair, I found these stilt living words:—

"This is some of my hair. Good night. God bless You. Anne."

This was the *finale* to the spirit writing at this sitting. At intervals I felt invisible hands touch me. Visible hands also appeared, starting from no apparent source, smoothing caressingly over my hands, and dematerialised as suddenly as they appeared. The touches by spirit hands once felt cannot well be mistaken: those that I felt were peculiar—soft, velvety, warm, and flesh-like, but refined—conveying much pleasure.

Mr. Slade possessed a small ordinary-looking accordeon, which I examined both inside and outside, but could discern nothing but what is common to other

accordeons. He took hold of the bottom part of it with his right hand, his left being on both mine on the table. The instrument, which he held horizontally, at first made sundry unsuccessful attempts to perform, and then, after a little while, steadied itself and played off "Home, Sweet Home" in fine melody and harmony.

In addition to those phases of mediumship already referred to, Mr. Slade has others, and amongst them is "trance." I heard several sounds, something like the clock tick-tick, which seemed to come from the medium's brain, when he was instantly entranced, and became altogether a different man in facial expression, voice, and manner. The spirit of the Indian Medicine Man, so well known as one of Mr. Slade's controls, had possession of the organism before me. The new temporary inhabitant said he was Owosso. I held a long conversation with him. Then I heard the "tick-tick" sounds as before, when the medium came as suddenly out of the trance as he had before gone into it; and said that he was quite unconscious of anything that had been spoken or done during the entrancement.

This seance, which lasted about an hour and a half, then terminated.

On the following morning, Wednesday, at ten o'clock. I again met Mr. Slade by appointment for another Sitting.

A lady, the wife of the owner of an extensive business establishment in Melbourne, took part in this seance.

The lady placed herself opposite Mr. Slade, on the

east side of the table, whilst Mr. Slade and I occupied our former positions.

She obtained several communications from the spirit world, all written on slates, and expressed herself delighted with the messages.

Raps—spirit raps—came pretty abundantly all around us, on the table, chairs, floor, etc., almost as soon as we were seated.

Hands—spirit hands—were being constantly laid on us, invisible to both the lady and myself, but seen by the clairvoyant vision of the medium.

The collar of my coat was taken hold of by an invisible force, just below the flower button-hole, and smartly tugged three or four times.

The medium asked, "Will any spirit present write for Mr. Curtis?"

The raps answered, "yes."

My slate was then taken by Mr. Slade and placed on my shoulder, when I again heard the grating noise of the tiny pencil across the schistose. Inspection revealed this declaration:—

"It was I that pulled your coat.—E. W——."

The next message, and the one following, both came from the same spirit-writer as the preceding, the originals are intact and in my possession.

"Please give my love to all my friends: tell them I am not dead, I am happy.—Eliza W——."

"Tell father to investigate, and he will be happy, and so will I.—Eliza. W——." *

* This communicating spirit wrote her Christian and surname in full; but permission to publish both has not been sought.

Eliza W——, from whom these messages came was an inhabitant of Ballarat, a young lady well-known and highly respected for her cheerful disposition and many other amiable qualities, and who "passed over" five or six years ago.

During an interval between the slate-writings, a gentleman's walking-cane, which was standing against the wall in the remotest corner of the room, moved towards me without apparent hands, grotesquely mimicing the movements of a walking-stick carried in the streets by a dandy. It then slid under the table and re-appeared, assumed various threatening attitudes, and gave me three or four gentle (make believe severe) cuts under my right arm. It might have been, and I can readily believe, that the young lady was simulating paying me back from the spirit-land for some sly fun perpetrated on terra firma in years gone by. The whole execution could hardly have been more naturally and distinctly characteristic had the young lady been present in her earthly garments threatening me with corporeal punishment and in mirthful frolic carrying out the menace.

At one period of this sitting, the lady who took part in these "manifestations of spirit" said, "I feel my pocket-handkerchief moving in my lap."

All the hands of the three persons present, except Mr. Slade's right hand which was holding a slate, were lying flat on the table.

She then felt in her lap, and found her handkerchief tied to its fullest capacity in hard knots.

A minute or two later, a handkerchief was thrown

from under the table to the furthest away corner of the *seance* room.

This little incident induced me to feel in my pocket for mine, but it was *non est* [not there], although I am sure it was there but a few moments earlier.

It was my own pocket-handkerchief, tied into hard knots, forming a ball, that had been thus mysteriously projected. As a reminder of the occurrence, I have saved the ball just as tied.

Mr. Slade never moved off his chair at either of these meetings, except when he became entranced at the end of the first sitting.

Once during the former sitting, a slate was forced by an unseen power from the medium's hand, and passed rapidly under and over the table, all round from one end to the other, three or four times, and then quietly rested on my knees.

At both these sittings the table rose from the floor into the mid-air, and remained thus about half-a-minute, a foot to eighteen inches high, without any visible support, its top surface horizontal.

Many more phenomena occurred, but further detail would perhaps encroach too much on your columns.—I am, sirs, yours truly,—ASTRAL.

[In Spiritualistic newspaper controversy, from the date, of this letter, I have mostly written under the *nom de plume* of "Astral," a few communications on the same subject were signed "A;" others receiving my own proper name whilst, for the sake of variety, some were subscribed "Hesper."]

CHAPTER IV.

MR. SLADE IN THE CIRCLE—SPIRITS WRITING, ETC.

"All the immense space with which we are surrounded is filled with Spirits."—Hilary.

"How vast is the power of Spirits. They are everywhere: above us, on the right, and on the left. Their coming cannot be calculated. How important we do not neglect them."—Confucius.

IN the month of November, 1878, Mr. Slade was giving *seances* in Ballarat. The secretary of our circle arranged with this medium for holding two meetings with its members on separate evenings.

On Wednesday evening, the 6th, at a quarter-past seven, I called at Lester's Hotel, Sturt Street, for Mr. Slade, and conducted him to the villa where our sittings were being held. On the way I obtained two new common school slates that had never been cleaned, nor used for writing purposes, as to this day they carry the greyish dusty appearance of unwashed slates.

On arrival, we found the ladies and gentlemen waiting, all seated encircling, the very large round table, two chairs having been reserved and placed for the medium and myself. Without loss of time we took our appointed places in the circle. The two slates I carried were placed on the centre of the table in sight of all present. There

were two other larger ones before us which had been provided by the secretary of the circle. Altogether about fourteen or fifteen persons were present, closely seated around the table, over which was a brilliant gas-lit chandelier.

All hands were laid flat on the top surface; and according to our usual custom every member joined in repeating the Lord's prayer." At the very instant of the utterance of the first words, "Our Father," the heavy table, with the additional weight of twenty-eight or thirty hands, rose in the air as high as from a foot to eighteen inches, the top being horizontally level, and remaining stationary and firm as a rock and unmoved during the whole time of the prayer; and then, at the word "Amen," immediately sank to the floor.

A hymn was then sung, in which everyone joined, when again the table rose buoyantly in the air to about the same elevation as before; but, instead of remaining quiescent as previously, it kept time to the words of the hymn, bobbing up and down an inch or two, according to the accent of the music or the tune. At the very first word it leaped straight upwards; and at the very last sound of a verse of eight lines it gently dropped to rest again on the floor.

Exactly similar phenomena occurred during the singing of the second and last verses, the table rising to a height of over a foot with the first word of the first line of each verse, and dropping with the last word of the last line of each verse.

No member present had ever witnessed table moving that could be compared with this.

From the commencement of the seance "raps" were constantly being heard and felt. Each member had knocks on the chair, he or she sat on which were distinctly heard by all, and vibrations were felt, by each individual whose chair in turn was being rapped.

These were the first "spirit raps" that, had ever been heard and felt in the circle and, since that night, I do not remember, any sitting at which there were not very numerous raps, perhaps never less than several hundred at any ordinary sitting.

The raps were just such sounds or noises as might be produced by sharp strokes with one's own knuckles on a table, all degrees of strength of sound being represented from contact with a large bony hand, such as might perhaps be heard all over the house, to the soft baby hand rap which could be heard only immediately around the circle. Sometimes, too, small explosions occurred in the surrounding atmosphere, which were heard by all in the room. For many years, when sitting quietly alone, or lying down listening; I have constantly felt and heard similar detonations, but weaker than those in the circle room. I never was able to gather any intelligence from those sounds, although we often did at our meetings.

Five or six taps on one of the slates were distinctly audible, and they were seen to move or, vibrate with the tapping. Mr. Slade explained that this meant that some spirit or spirits were able and willing to write. All were anxious to witness the spirit-writing on slates, and here was indicated the probability of these desires being gratified; but, whilst the slates were ready, no pencil had been thought of.

However, our hostess soon removed, the difficulty by producing from an adjoining room, the necessary article encased in cedar; a short piece, about a quarter of an inch, was soon released and placed between two of the slates by the medium, who then held them in his right hand, his left being flat on the table. Writing commenced immediately, and continued at a rapid rate. The silence of the members was profound. All heard the peculiar grating noise incidental to the quick movement of slate pencils. Long strokes of the capital letters, and f's and g's, and so on, could be distinguished from the shorter marks of even letters, and the dotting of i's and crossing t's discriminated. Two or three raps were heard on the slates, which signified the writing was completed. The slates were then separated, and writing on one of them, in a distinct bold-hand, was before us; the unused remains of the grain of pencil sticking to the end: of the last letter N where the writing ended. The secretary then read aloud the communication, thus:—

"Dear Friends.—What fear you for frowns for doing God's work:? Think how great and wonderful is the power that is given to you, that of revealing to man the immortal life, and the power to give him knowledge, and to dispel the fear of death. Go on, dear ones, and I shall be ever with you.—G. Wilson."

This message, so wonderfully produced, seemed to give much pleasure to participators.

Conversation and expressions of opinions were indulged in on the various and extraordinary phenomena around and about us. Raps were heard coming from all parts of the room, and the members stated that they were being

containing constantly touched by invisible hands. Chairs, containing the sitters, were now then suddenly twisted or jerked round or drawn back from the circle.

Raps were again heard on one of the slates lying on the table. Mr. Slade then, took those which I brought to the meeting and dropped a tiny slate, pencil on to one of them, covering it with the other. He then held the slates together by their rims with thumb and fingers of his right hand. Some influence seemed to, draw them towards a member, the next sitter but one on Mr. Slade's right, and, passing the lady who sat next to him, the slates rested on the head of Mr. ———. Writing—scratchy, scrapy, slate pencil writing—was heard by all, and quick and vigorous were the strokes, up and down, long and short, till the end, lasting, altogether, about two or three minutes. Mr. Slade remarked, "My head seems going round and round," which had been observed by the members, his head swaying, in a series of circles. He further spoke, "I never felt like this before, I feel, almost giddy." Three or four taps on the slates denoted that the writing was completed, The slates were then separated and examined, and the scrap of unused pencil was seen sticking at the end of the last written alphabetic letter N. The writing brought to view had been done in a most remarkable manner, on the upper and lower enclosed surfaces as shown on both the slates, whilst being held at arm's length over and on the head of the gentleman already referred to.

The Chairman, Mr. Bechervaise, who sat next Mr. Slade, on his left, then read the following:

"Oh Spirit of Truth, Wisdom, and Power, may the world know that not one of Thy children is denied the blessed privilege of communing with the spirit world. Oh! may the inhabitants of Earth no longer doubt or debar themselves of this privilege of looking into what they call the mysteries of heaven. We wish to cast aside the veil of darkness and error which has hidden the truth from their sight. We thank Thee, O Divine Principle of Truth, that Thy love is for all Thy children of Earth. We know, O Father, that Thy powerful arm will encircle this little band that are so true and faithful in this glorious work, blessing human souls. Dear friends, be true to your work, as I am true to you—I am,—REV. G. WILSON."

It may be here remarked that I have these slates in my possession, the writing untouched. Photographs have been taken, each member possessing a copy. [See reduced *fac-simile*, pages 48 and 49.]

Conversation was flowing freely all round the table, when Mr. Slade said, "I feel that I am going into a trance, but don't be alarmed. I sometimes speak, but I am unconscious of what I say." His eye-lids closed, and two or three convulsive movements of his body shook him. He then rose slowly from his chair to a standing position; and in a deep, clear, and solemn voice, entirely different in tone and style to his usual language and expression, addressed the members in an oration, and concluded with an invocation, which was said to come through the medium's organism from Dr. Davis, one of Mr. Slade's controls.

The address was masterly; the diction without fault

the subject most serious in character; and the invocation that followed, addressed to the Great Father of humanity deeply reverential and impressive, carried an awe which almost startled the hearers with its solemn earnestness, beauty, and truthfulness of expression.

At the close of the prayer, or invocation, Mr. Slade abruptly came out of the trance, and said, "Oh, did I speak?"

After a little while, other remarkable occurrences followed: ordinary lead pencils rose on the table, and seemed to attempt writing on their own account; a handbell after being tied to a piece of twine, about eighteen inches long, and fastened to the fore-finger of one of the sitters was placed on the centre of the table, from whence it repeatedly rose in the air without visible help, and, releasing the twine from his finger, the bell took flight over the chairman's head, and landed on the floor a good distance from the circle.

It was then proposed to turn the gas very low, which was done, when lights appeared floating about the room. These termed "spirit lights," were of various sizes and brilliances, and visible to all. Two slates that were left on the table, moved about of themselves in a strange manner on, over, and under the table. A lady said, "I feel my pocket-handkerchief being taken from me." When the meeting was over, her handkerchief was found tied in hard knots forming a solid ball. Several members were touched on the head, back, and shoulders, by hands that could belong to no person present, because, at the same time, all the hands of the sitters were linked together. A cool wind at intervals fanned the members.

Once, something came against me, with a good deal of force, like a pushing wind, which rested on my face and down to my waist; it was a new sensation, as if a cool breeze had got hold of, and remained for some time attached to me.

The *seance*, which was a long one, was brought to a close by singing a verse in full score.

When I called for Mr. Slade, at the hotel, he had not been informed to what part of the city he was to be conducted. He was lightly clad, and took no other externals than all ordinary walking-stick, which, together with his hat, were left in the hall outside the circle-room. He sat in the chair provided for him between our own lady medium and Mr. Bechervaise, the chairman, and never rose till the *seance* was ended except for the trance address, when he simply stood up without moving away.

The evening was spent in a highly satisfactory manner and will, I believe, never be forgotten by any one then present.

At the next sitting with Mr. Slade, about a fortnight later than the one I have endeavored to describe, many manifestations, similar to those already noted at the former *seances* were presented. Materialisations of spirit forms were specially desired and, no doubt, each member thought of the possibilities of beholding his or her own spirit friends "appear in the midst" of the assembly.

Mr. Slade is not what is termed a "materialising medium," although materialisations frequently occur at his *seances*.

With this hope, then, that spirits would appear, preparations were made. A piece of black glazed calico lining

reaching six feet high from the floor to a cord, stretching from wall to wall, was hung across an angle of the room, and which formed a screen just at the back of some and in front of others, according, to position around the table, but all could see the curtain by turning a little to the right or to the left. I cut three slits, each about eighteen inches long, forming a "drop" in the curtain just a little higher than the heads of the sitters. This "drop" could be lifted, and substances or materialisations from behind the screen shown through the opening. Mr. Slade never went behind, but sat, like the other sitters, with both his hands, on the table, joining respectively the hands of the members immediately to his right and left.

The "drop" was lifted several times by invisible means, and hands momentarily showed through the orifice: but a greater attempt than this at materialisation was soon shown. Again the curtain drop was gently lifted, and there appeared in the opening the distinct form of a female face and shoulders, which was seen by all. A lady member suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, it is my sister!" The fright it gave her was too much for her nerves to bear, and she sank into a fainting fit. The face of the spirit-materialisation faded: the "drop" fell: and water was obtained to aid the lady member's recovery. The conditions necessary for the production of this phase of spirit phenomenon were then broken, and no further hope was entertained that evening of any others of our spirit friends appearing in our midst.

But, in a little while, after order and harmony were somewhat restored, Mr. Slade again became entranced, as in the former sitting, and was again controlled by his spirit-guide, Dr. Davis, who gave another eloquent address, which

no one who heard could resist ascribing to a power altogether beyond the normal intelligence and ability of the medium. This was followed by another address, from the spirit Owosso, the Indian medicine man, widely different in character to the preceding.

The circle closed in the usual manner, and Mr. Slade was cordially thanked for these visits, and for the light which he had been the means of affording on a subject so fraught with interest to all the members.

I have been brief in detail. Much of what I have only hinted at would well bear a fuller description; but, as I intend to accompany Mr. Slade further in private sittings, I will now leave the circle to return again and follow its progress in future chapters.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER SITTINGS WITH MR. SLADE.—SPIRITS
WRITING, MATERIALISING, ETC.

A newly discovered fact may overthrow the opinion of a lifetime. One little truth, one single ray of light, may remove the folly of years."

"Spiritualism is the Angel of Reform, the Omega of Skeptics, the Death-knell of Fanaticism."—Mrs. J. T. Burton.

"And behold a hand touched me."—Dan. x. 10.

THE number of sittings I had alone with Mr. Slade amounted to about a dozen, and four or five with one or two other persons present.

At both his visits to Ballarat, he located himself at Lester's Hotel. He brought no apparatus with him. He purchased his slates and pencils at the nearest stationer's shop; and borrowed from me a small mahogany table which I bought in London in 1862, the Kensington Exhibition year. The table had a hanging flap on each side of a centre board; and when the flaps were raised a surface of about three feet six inches square was formed. It moved easily on castors, and had a small drawer at one end fitting under the centre top.

Immediately on the delivery of the table at the hotel I placed it on the centre of the drawing-room floor, and Mr. Slade at once sat with me for the purpose of communing with the spirit-world. The large city clock in the vicinity

seemed looking with its broad face directly through the windows down upon us; its hands, both perpendicularly pointing to the sky, marked the hour of noon, which was at once ratified by the chimes of four quarters and the booming of twelve sonorous peals.

Slade's hands and mine were flat on the table. We had been sitting thus but a few minutes, leisurely chatting, when a spirit-hand, which in all respects seemed like the human hand, came up from under the table, and moved about very rapidly in all directions, and varying in distance before us from a foot to a yard, turning about showing every part; and then swiftly returned in the direction whence it came. It remained visible but a few seconds; its source seemed about my knees, passing between my arms in coming and going. No hand could be more distinctly seen nor better defined. Its coming, too, was a pleasing surprise: I recognised it at the moment it appeared. There was conformity as to size, and a peculiarity about it as in the life on earth. It was the hand of my friend who died in Southampton more than thirty years ago, and which I had seen thousands of times.

I supposed the spirit-owner, knowing my tendency to scepticism, "materialised" this mark of identity—this copy of her hand—for the purpose of enabling me to overcome the dregs of my unbelief regarding a future life, and of adding to the knowledge that those who are gone from us are not dead, as commonly imagined, but still retain their individuality, or personality, and might under favorable circumstances still hold converse with, and exhibit fragments or their full personal identity to the denizens of Earth.

No doubt I had, up to this time, many tests which

would be regarded by most enquirers as more than sufficient proofs of the reality of the spirit-world; but, as I have already said, my one desire was for exact truth at all hazards, and I was still intently watchful and guarded lest I should deceive myself or be in any way deceived. It was really difficult to give up notions (some of which had had many years' or a life time's growth), in favour of new ideas, even although presented in the shape of such pleasing and palpable facts.

We continued this sitting, when other hands, both large and small, appeared momentarily above the table, and coming from all directions; and several times, at subsequent sittings, I saw the hand of the friend of my youth exactly as I knew it "long, long ago."

We succeeded in getting slate-writing Other manifestations of spirit-power were shown, such as raising the table in mid-air, and moving chairs and other objects in various parts of the room, all without visible contact. My watch at this *seance*, and one subsequently, was taken out of my waistcoat pocket and dangled about in all directions before us, and finally gently laid on the table, whilst all our hands (Slade's and mine) were lying palms downward flat on the mahogany.

At subsequent sittings I obtained on slates more messages, purporting to come from some whom I had known in earth-life, the language generally couched in affectionate and loving terms; and now, although I obtained so many slates full of spirits' writing, I shall refer to but one of the communications that were so kindly and considerately written.

About the fifth or sixth sitting with Mr. Slade, I

carried to Lester's drawing-room two new Faber's school slates: the medium dropped a grain of pencil between them, and immediately held them in his right hand, between his thumb and fingers, perpendicularly on my shoulder, when I distinctly heard writing in progress line after line from the top to the bottom between the slates. On one of them the words were written which I have reproduced in the engraving, reproduced from eleven inches by seven to suit this work, and printed on the opposite page; the *fac simile* by the photographer and the engraver. Here are the words:—

"My dear and faithful one,—It has made me very happy by showing you my form, as I did the other evening. My dear, I shall not be able to show myself to-night, as the night is bad—bad for us to show ourselves; so I will write you a good letter and tell you how you please me by doing your earth work so well and so noble; the better you do the more enjoyment you will I receive when you come to me. I shall be the first to meet you when you come, and shall have a "beautiful home for you. The time will not belong before we shall meet to part no more, and then I can call myself your own loving ANNIE B——."

The original has been carefully kept.

My friend's reference to showing herself will be alluded to further on.

It may be noted that the name Anne or Annie is spelt in both ways in this work. Such was her common habit before transition to write her name sometimes *Anne* and at other times *Annie*. This arose from the fact that some people make no distinction in pronouncing Anne and

Ann; and although this matter may seem trivial, yet it is a curious circumstance that the custom should be continued in the "after-life." I have written Anne almost throughout for the sake of uniformity, although my friend from the Summerland wrote mostly with the additional vowel.

At one of our seances, whilst some slate-writing was being performed, Mr. Slade said: "I see a name in large letters on your coat sleeve: I take it to be the name of the spirit now writing on one of the slates on your shoulder." He told me the name he saw, and which proved to be the same as that written on the slate. After this, our conversation turned on the medium Foster, and the crimson writing of names of deceased friends and relatives of his patrons. Slade again remarked "Perhaps words or letters would appear on your bare arm like those on your coat sleeve; I should like to see." I then took off my coat and tucked my shirt-sleeve high above the elbow joint; but after watching for some length of time he said he could perceive no trace of writing. The day being warm, my arm remained bare during the remainder of the sitting. At this, and every other seance with Mr. Slade, I felt spirit hands on my knees, shoulders, arms, etc. I placed in); arm under the table for the purpose of trying whether it might be touched on the bare limb. The result was marvellous; for almost immediately I felt a soft warm hand clasp my wrist, and then pass up and down my arm in a soothing and caressing manner, and at times grasping firmly around the muscles, and, perhaps, performing all that a naked hand could affectionately do on a bare arm. An idea sprang into my mind to try whether spirits could respond to unexpressed thoughts by touch. I then mentally

requested to be pinched, when this desire was at once complied with by the responsive spirit hands and fingers. Again, I silently wished to be pinched hard in two or three places in order that I might carry the marks of the compression for a time imprinted on the skin surface. This wish, too, was promptly achieved; and during the next three or four days I was enabled to show those small signs of spirit force to my friends. My third and last test, silently asked of the immortal who read the thoughts and acted on the desires of the mortal, was that my arm should be gripped with sufficient pressure to retain awhile the imprint of the operating hand and fingers. The conception had scarcely taken definite form when the force of a tight grasp was at once realised. On examination, only the prints of the fingers could be seen, and these disappeared after a little while. This kind of communion continued about a quarter of an hour, and let it be borne in mind of any who may peruse these details that both of Mr. Slade's hands, with my right, were flat on the top surface of the table, whilst my left hand and arm, furthest from Slade, were under the table.

At another sitting, a very large materialised spirit-hand took hold of mine, and left its impress on my wrist by deep indentations of large nails of the first, second, and third fingers. The evidence of these marks of favor, though rather severe, I carried several days, and was pleased to show them to man), interested persons.

Several times my right hand was shaken by a spirit-hand as one friend shakes another's and twice or thrice I gently tried to retain the spirit-hand, but without success the material dematerialised within mine.

Often, incidentally, I "dropped in" at Slade's hotel for a little chat. He said he never saw me enter his room without being accompanied by a spirit. From the description he gave I had no difficulty in recognising who our companion was. Mr. Slade, being clairvoyant, always saw the same associate moving about the room during my presence there, and wondered why I could not, also, clairvoyantly recognise my spirit friend.

A lady took part in a *seance* with Mr. Slade and myself. Many manifestations of spirit power occurred, all of which it is not necessary to describe, as the account would be similar in some respects to that I have already written; but several spirit-hands appeared over the table, and the lady got messages in slate-writing from her own friends who had "gone over." She held her slates in her own hand, independently of Mr. Slade and myself, and obtained a slateful in our own language, and another in what appeared to be a very ancient tongue, which none of us knew anything of; but I saw that it was carefully and well written; and would, I think, take a good copyist a full hour to reproduce what was done, in this instance, in a few minutes.

Another lady, about eighteen or nineteen years of age, wished me to accompany her to a *seance* with Mr. Slade. We proceeded to the hotel, carrying two new slates just selected from a stationer's shop. Many of the usual phenomena took place. In a minute or two after we were seated the medium asked the Summerland visitors whether there were any present who would write for the young lady. In the language of raps, "Yes" was given in reply. Slade held her own twain slates on her shoulder, and in

a short space of time, on one of the slates there was written a full page bearing a long communication signed by her former schoolmistress, who had been in the world of spirits four or five years. After the reading, the writing was effaced with a wet sponge. She now regrets that she did not either copy the message or carry away the slate with the writing on it. Immediately after the foregoing, the same was again filled with writing as previously on her shoulder, and contained three messages; the first in German, the second in English, and the third in the French language.* This slate has been kept and photo

* I have met with the following, by BARON CARL DU PURL, and my experience enables me to agree with every proposition, from 1 to 12:—

"One thing is clear; that is, that psychography must be ascribed to a transcendental origin. We shall find: (1) That the hypothesis of prepared slates is inadmissible, (2) The place on which the writing is found is quite inaccessible to the hands of the medium. In some cases the double slate is securely locked, leaving only room inside for the tiny morsel of slate-pencil. (3) That the writing is actually done at the time. (4) That the medium is not writing. (5) That the writing must be actually done with the morsel of slate or lead-pencil. (6) The writing is done by an intelligent being, since the answers are exactly pertinent to the questions. (7) This being can read, write, and understand the language of human beings, frequently such as is unknown to the medium. (8) It strongly resembles a human being, as well in the degree of its intelligence as in the mistakes sometimes made. These beings are therefore, although invisible, of human nature or species. It is no use whatever to fight against this proposition. (9) If these beings speak, they do so in human language. (10) If they are asked who they are, they answer that they are beings who have left this world. (11) When these appearances become partly visible, perhaps only their hands, the hands seen are of human form. (12) When these things become entirely visible, they show the human form and countenance."

graphs taken of its contents. Soon after the writing was completed, as she was quietly sitting, she was suddenly levitated, or lifted into mid-air, together with the chair on which she sat. She rose with the chair more than a foot from the floor, and both remained thus some time suspended without visible support. This was the first case of levitation of a mortal being I had ever seen, and the fact of such an incident being accomplished rather astonished me. I was in a position to observe all the carpeted floor under the chair, to look over the young lady's head, and to see all around her, the time being mid-day, in a liberally-windowed drawing-room. The arrangement and position of table, chairs, etc., was made by myself immediately before we all sat down at this *seance*; and neither of us had intimated to Mr. Slade our intention of visiting or holding a sitting with him.

After we left the hotel drawing-room, I asked her what she thought of all the phenomena she had seen. She said the whole *seance* was certainly most extraordinary, and not easy to be understood; and she felt quite sure of the absence of any attempt at trickery. This was the first time she witnessed any manifestations of spirits.

Mr. Slade told me that he rarely sat for the materialisation of spirits in full form. His usual custom with his patrons was to sit and wait for writing to come either on open or closed slates, when, sometimes at intervals, materialised spirit-hands appeared, and other phenomena occurred, such as have already been referred to; but success was by no means equal, and sometimes no sign whatever was given of the presence of spirits or spirit

power. His objections to sitting for this kind of evidence expectant from the world of spirits in full bodily form were, firstly, he did not like to do so because too much of his vitality was needed, and which left him for a while very weak; and, secondly, he preferred that all the phenomena should be shown in the fullest day or gas light. However, he consented to sit with me in semidarkness and try what manifestations could be obtained. Altogether, we sat four times for "materialisations," with varying success. Three of those sittings were held in Ballarat and one in Melbourne.

Our first test of spirit appearance in the form took place at Lester's Hotel. I placed the table about four or five feet from the west wall of the room. Mr. Slade sat at the end of the table furthest from the wall, whilst I took my position on the north side. The gas-light was toned down, not so much but that any object in the room could be clearly seen. Our hands were placed one over another in a single pile. We sat very still about ten minutes when I observed something like a little misty cloud between myself and the wall. When my attention was first drawn toward this phenomenon, it was about the size and color of a gentleman's high-crowned whitish-grey felt hat. This cloudlike appearance rapidly grew and became transformed, when we saw before us a woman—a lady. The being thus fashioned, and all-but-perfected rose from the floor on to the top of the table, where I could most distinctly observe the configuration. The arms and hands were elegantly shaped, the forehead, mouth, nose, cheeks, and beautiful brown hair showed harmoniously, each part in concord with the whole. Only the eyes were veiled because they could not be

completely materialised. The feet were encased in white satin shoes. The dress glowed in light, and was the most beautiful I ever beheld, the color being bright sheeny silvery grey, or greyish shining white. The whole figure was graceful, and the drapery perfect. The materialised spirit glided and walked about, causing the table to shake, vibrate, jerk, and tilt considerably. I could hear, too, the rustling of the dress as the celestial visitant transiently wended from one position or place to another. The spirit form, within two feet of our unmoved hands still piled up together in a heap, then dissolved, and gradually faded from our vision.

We continued very quiet, in the same attitude, a further space of about a quarter of an hour, when I once again observed a similar cloud of magnetism gather as before, I write "magnetism" because I do not know what other better term to apply to the cloud-like whitish-grey vapour that was accumulating and forming so near us, and I have often heard others so name this kind of floating body so often seen in spiritualistic circles. This something, then, enlarged until the same spirit form again appeared beautifully attired, as before, just as I have attempted to describe. The apparition then floated in the air and alighted on the table, rapidly glided about, and thrice bent her beautiful figure with graceful bows, each bending deliberate and low, the head coming within six inches of my face. The dress rustled (as silk rustles) with every movement. The face was partially veiled as before. The visibility then became invisible, slowly disappearing like the former materialisation.

No other spirit form was presented that evening

although we sat some time longer in expectancy; but a materialised hand of one of the spiritual beings which we felt around and about us found its way into my inner left-side breast coat-pocket, and drew from thence a letter in an envelope, and rustled and waved it about in all directions, and then gently dropped it on the table. I had nothing but this one document in the pocket, but the hand again glided into the orifice and moved about at its full depth as if searching for something more, when it rested and dissolved or dematerialised in the aperture of my coat. I devoutly wished the gentle hand, so good and kind, to remain longer palpable, but such could not be. Our *seance* then ended,

At subsequent sittings in Ballarat with this gentleman. I saw several materialised spirit heads and faces. Twice I think I clearly recognised the features, but they were a little too quick in fading away for me to pronounce on the likenesses with positive certainty: the bust was complete in both cases down to the waist, around which was a girdle with a pretty bunch of small roses fastened in the front. For a moment or two the appearances were brilliant. There was a little variation in the two materialisations, once the belt or girdle was apparently of fine gold. The pretty little bunch of small pinky-white roses possessed a meaning to me which no other flowers had, and no other mortal knew of.

Immediately after the above-mentioned manifestations of spirit the medium became entranced, and the spirit-control (Dr. Davis) conversed and spoke very earnestly, in eloquent language, of the spirit-world, and how those who were interested would endeavour to impress good and

beautiful thoughts on my mind, etc. He (the control) said, my dear friend had tried hard to materialise herself and appear to me, but had not succeeded so well as she desired. This was greatly owing to the medium's restlessness and excessive nervousness; and often when spirit phenomenon was almost ready for exhibition they had to commence *de novo* [anew]. Dr. Davis then referred to events that had taken place in my life more than thirty years ago, of the knowledge of which I had considered myself the sole custodian; he seemed to know at least some of my early history as well or better than I knew it myself.

This and other addresses that I have been honored in having the opportunity of listening to, through this medium, were all of a most earnest and impressive character; and will, no doubt, carry their influence throughout my present life, as it would be almost impossible to forget the ideas and lessons inculcated. No one, I am persuaded, could have heard as I heard from the spirit-world without gaining knowledge, or without being happier and better for the hearing.

Many other phases of spirit presence and intelligence, revealed at these sittings, I have omitted to record here, as similar occurrences may be found scattered throughout the chapters of this book.

The last *seance* for materialisation phenomena that I held with Mr. Slade was conducted in Melbourne. Five or six spirits showed themselves in full form, one of which was my mother whom I was enabled to recognise.

I remember but one failure when sitting for the

psychographic phenomena with Mr. Slade. I desired writing on a special kind of book slate which I could not then purchase at any stationer's shop. I knew a gentleman who had the exact sort I wanted—three distinct slates bound together within a cover. This, which had been in use a long time, I obtained from the owner. Slade placed between the pages a tiny piece of pencil and closed the covers. Both of us laid the tips of our fingers on the book slate as soon as it was placed flat on the table, when immediately the book became inflated, and distended considerably, and all the slate portions burst into fragments. No difficulty of this kind ever occurred with new slates.

The medium, at our last sitting together, remarked that he believed more phenomena had been shown, by the inhabitants of the spirit spheres, in my presence with him, than had been presented to the view of any other single individual at his seances, considering the number of sittings held. He attributed the cause to my quiet watchfulness and unobtrusiveness or non-interference with the manifestations presented, and to my rarely asking questions whilst phenomena were being shown, and also thankfully receiving whatever form of spirit-communion the people from the other world choose to give, or perhaps had the opportunity of showing.

If Mr. Henry Slade should ever scan this chapter, his memory will, no doubt, recur to the various phenomena with which I was favored from relatives and friends of the bright Summerland; and I now publicly thank him for his uniform kindness, and for all the communications I received through his mediumship

front the "loved and lost,"* from whom, at the period before the commencement of the seances herein described, I did not previously believe that ever "two words"* could be spoken to me on this side the grave.

* The quoted expressions, "loved and lost," and "two words," have reference to a paragraph in the preface, quoted from MONS. ERNEST RENAN:—" If we could but once a year exchange two words with our loved and lost, death would be no longer death."

CHAPTER VI.

SITTINGS WITH MR. JESSE SHEPARD.

"The signs of those that are inspired are multiform... Again, the body is seen to be taller or longer, or is elevated, or borne aloft through the air."—Iamblicus.

BEFORE Mr. Slade had taken his departure from Victoria, Mr. Jesse Shepard, medium, arrived in Melbourne.

His seances consisted principally of musical performances, said to be given under control of high class spirit musicians.

Other phases of mediumship, often in combination with the musical, presented themselves, such as movements of inanimate objects, raps, materialisations, etc., and also inspirational writing, and development of mediumship in others.

His mediumship was widely different in style and character to Mr. Slade's. Mr. Slade desired as much light as possible, whilst Mr. Shepard generally regarded darkness, or semi-darkness, as desirable, if not necessary, for the exhibition of many of the manifestation of spirits through himself. Yet darkness was not always insisted on, as I have held seances with him in darkness, semidarkness, and full daylight, and never without spirit manifestations of some kind.

I first met with Mr. Shepard at his private lodgings in Melbourne. After chatting awhile, he got a sheet of foolscap and pencil, and wrote a full folio in a crooked scrawley hand. The writing was addressed to me, and purported to come from a historical* spirit, who lived and flourished on the earth two thousand five hundred years ago. This was not a seance but a casual call. Mr. Shepard informed me that he was engaged for several evenings to hold musical sittings at a private gentleman's house, and he would ask permission for me to sit one evening there with him and his family.

The favor having been obtained for the following evening, a little before eight o'clock I was on my way to Dr. Motherwell's residence, Collins Street.

The seance was held in the gentleman's large drawing room. There were altogether present six persons, including the medium. Shepard seated himself at the grand piano, nearly in the centre of the elegantly furnished apartment. The others sat back about a dozen feet from the medium at the key-board, forming themselves in a segment of a circle, with a small table immediately in front on which was placed a guitar, tambourine, and pasteboard speaking trumpet. Dr. Motherwell seated himself on the left side of the semi-circle, I sat on the right, and three ladies in their chairs immediately between us. The room was darkened—but not absolutely dark, for we could still see one another.

* Cyrus. At a sitting with a lady, in trance, in New South Wales, a spirit spoke most eloquently through her organism. He claimed to have lived in Egypt about five thousand years back.

The music commenced. In a few minutes I was quite sure there was a spirit standing at my right hand. I could not see but could feel the spirit. A soft cool wind played about my face and hands, and then I could feel a gentle pressure around me. This evidence of spirits' vicinity is sometimes peculiar; and since that time I have often been favored with a like consciousness of the immortals presence. I cannot attempt to fully describe the sensation, but its nature is as positively substantial as enveloping waters are whilst one is bathing. The spirit that was so close to me whispered her name—the name of a dear and loving friend. Again, in a little while, the low soft voice gently repeated her name and other endearing words; and still once more, a little later, her name was softly breathed, accompanied by a loving message. No words could be spoken more distinctly, or more clearly heard. The medium was all this time performing pleasing operatic and other music at the grand piano.

During the seance, two or three hymns were sung by the group of ladies and gentlemen with piano accompaniment. Whilst one of these songs of praise was being chanted, a spirit-chorister in a magnificently clear pure tenor voice, the source certainly not more than twelve inches from my face, joined melodiously in a verse of six lines of the popular hymn then being sung. No human tones ever seemed to me so clear as this harmonious voice.

At the time the musical performances were going on, spirit hands were now and again about me—on my face, head, shoulders, and arms; and names (with messages)

were given of some of my ancient relatives who had ages ago gone to the "land of rest."

The other sitters were likewise similarly favored with messages from their spirit-friends, and said that they also were constantly being touched by spirit-hands.

A single line of a hymn was sung to me by an Independent spirit-voice; the next line was warbled to the adjoining sitter; and so on to the end, and back again.

The guitar that was placed on the table commenced and continued at intervals sailing, or floating, around the room near the ceiling, and over and about our heads, Sometimes touching or resting first on one, and then on another, whilst at the same time beautifully soft music escaped from its chords indicating its presence either near or distant; and, during these phenomena, the medium was performing splendid piano music. The tambourine now and then flew about the room in a boisterous manner, striking first one and then another on the head, knees, elbows, or shoulders. The speaking trumpet, too, floated about with voices speaking to all in turn, sometimes indeed with startling emphasis, and at other times with gently-spoken messages.

This never-to-be-forgotten *seance* finished with a performance, entitled "The Grand Egyptian March." Whilst the piano was rolling forth a volume of chords equal in power to several ordinary instruments combined, sounds like harp accompaniment were heard, together with noises like tramping or marching about and around the piano-forte with naked feet. Many other peculiar manifestations of spirit greeted the senses of the little company

thus met together for gaining knowledge of and from the spirit-world.

This medium paid a visit of two or three weeks' duration to the city of Ballarat, and gave semi-public musical *seances*, and held developing classes and cabinet materialisations. At the latter, at each sitting, several forms appeared outside the roughly constructed wood cabin which had been put together in this city for the medium's use. In addition to a door to this movable room, there was in its front a window or opening, about fifteen or eighteen inches wide and broad. At each meeting one after another of the persons forming the small assemblage was called towards the window. A curtain across the aperture concealing the interior of the cabinet was frequently partly lifted. My opportunity arrived: I was standing near the opening, and was favoured with a loving message from a spirit who was beside me outside the cabinet. The voice was low, but quite audible and distinct. None of the other sitters were within a distance of, three or four yards of the spot where I stood. The curtain moved up a little way and I was enabled to see into the cabinet. The medium appeared to be in a dead trance. Waiting a few minutes longer, the screen wholly lifted, when I looked in, in wonder, and saw a most exquisitely beautiful female figure—lovely indeed beyond any adequate description that I can write. The form was perfect from the crown of the head downward to the waist; a wreath of gold and green ivy leaves bound the beautiful brown hair; the delicate freshness and colour of the face seemed to be wondrously lovely and perfect, while the eyes were marvellously soft and deep with finished eyebrows and eyelashes. I saw this

figure three successive times, each glimpse but momentarily, yet singularly clear and distinct, and luminous.

The full forms that materialised—some evenings there were seven or eight—came out of the cabinet door; they seemed complete, but most of them too shadowy to be recognised. One of the ladies present said she was quite sure about one of the spirit materialisations, that it was her granddaughter, a child who had a few months previously passed on to the Summerland. Others confessed to recognitions more or less distinct.

I was invited to a *seance* one evening at a gentleman's house in this city. There were altogether five persons present in the drawing-room. At the opening Shepard performed some music on the Broadwood Semi-grand at the further or northern end of the room. This finished, it being noticed that the instrument was somewhat out of tune, the medium joined the other members of the party, about fifteen or sixteen feet distant from the piano. Without delay there commenced and continued a process of tuning; the strings were being struck, and the wrenching discordant sounds peculiar to this operation were distinctly heard as if a tuner were at work. No earthly human shape was near the instrument, and the inference deduced was, that our invisible friends were tuning for us when no other help was available. The great lid of the pianoforte was closed, the fall at the keyboard alone raised. An enjoyable evening was spent, whilst many curious phenomena, exhibitiv of spirit-power, were made manifest, and which closely engaged the attention of the company assembled together for their enlargement of knowledge of psychological forces.

Mr. Shepard was strolling along the streets with me one very clear evening; at a little after ten o'clock we passed my place of business, when I suggested that we should turn back and hold a sitting in one of the workrooms. He agreed. I borrowed two chairs from the adjacent hotel. We sat: and in a very short time lights were seen hovering about in many shapes—some like cloven tongues, similar in form to those delineated in pictures of the Day of Pentecost. Spirit hands were frequently placed on mine; materialised faces appeared; voices from all parts of the room spoke messages; and I once saw lips slowly form in the air, which came and kissed me on the cheek, and then dematerialised. They were beautifully soft, warm lips. Twice I saw the medium elongated* as he sat within two or three feet of me.

My experience leads me to suggest that spirit manifestations can be most easily obtained when the surrounding atmosphere is in its clearest and brightest degree; and phenomena should be sought for in places not near busy crowds of people, but as far away as convenient from noises or disturbances of all kinds, and where the whole environment is of a pure and cheerful character. But, if conditions are not wanting, spirits may be found perhaps anywhere or everywhere. Late one evening, Mr. Shepard, another gentleman, and myself went into an oyster saloon, and sat down to supper. Whilst we were there, "raps" were continuous—on the ceiling, the side-boards, the chairs on which we sat and others, on and under the

* His body became at least two feet longer, and thus remained a little while.

table, on and under the plates before us, and on the floor. Intelligence could also be furnished through these raps by questions being put either vocally or mentally.

The number and variety of spirit manifestations that I witnessed with Mr. Shepard would, amplified, fill a good sized book; but to fairly and fully represent this kind of literature, in combination with being witness to the phenomena, qualifications such as artist, scientist, shorthand reporter, and author, are *desiderata*.

CHAPTER VII.

CIRCLE MEETINGS—CONTINUED.

"We live, emphatically, in an age of investigation and improvement, when light seems to be pouring in oceans in our world; and he who shuts his eyes, and then scoffs and sneers because others open theirs and see, is not only recreant to duty, but does society an irreparable wrong."—Rev. John B. Dods.

ALMOST every member of our circle agreed that we were too many for perfect harmony, and better results would likely be obtained by dividing into two or more companies. We thus accordingly separated mutually, but with the intention of occasionally meeting together in union to compare experiences, etc.

Those with whom I threw in my lot met at a gentleman's house in Doveton Street. We were nine; but, owing to one and another's removal from the city, the circle became less. Our harmony was good, and the general results of our investigations concerning the truth—or otherwise of spiritual phenomena cannot conscientiously be pronounced otherwise than absolutely in favour of spirit manifestation.

Meetings were periodically and regularly held, and absence of any member from the circle was of rare Occurrence excepting when away from the district. During a period of about seven years the circle met once a week, and a good portion of this time twice a week,

Of course we had our adjournments for the customary holidays, etc.

The usual mode of procedure consisted of assembling and seating ourselves around an ordinary loo table in a small drawing-room. One of the members then usually read an invocation. Conversation, or singing in harmony, followed; and during the latter spirit raps became frequent. We then sat passively, speaking either in subdued tones or remaining in silence, during which time one of the circle, a lady, became entranced, and under control of spirits from the "other world," the trance continuing from half to three-quarters of an hour. We had a reserve of fifteen minutes for special "spirit raps." Usually after these raps, "spirit lights." Then "spirit-writing," and other "phenomena," or in other words "spirit manifestations."

No fixed rules, however, were made for the guidance of the circle, and not unfrequent were its variations. Other kinds of revelations than those specified above were numerous, some of which may be referred to in this or succeeding chapters.

It was often a matter of special regret to me at spiritualistic meetings that I had not qualified myself to record orations or speeches *verbatim*. There was no student of Pitman or Gurney in our little band; at least, no one sufficiently advanced for careful reporting. A few efforts were made to reproduce from memory the substance of some of the addresses that were given in trance at our meetings; but these attempts never represented beyond a small degree the original utterances that were so vividly spoken by our immediate friends and newly-made acquaintances

from the world of spirits. Our communicants in all these phases of spirit intercommunication were numerous, and, as may be easily imagined, interesting to the highest degree. Our friends' positions, occupations, enjoyments, means of progress, etc., in spirit life were freely spoken of and easily given through the source of the instrument we term trance medium. Addresses of great strength, and beauty were often expressed, and sometimes on subjects which the medium, in her normal condition, had but little or no knowledge of, and which stamped the spirit controls with understanding beyond that in possession of their brethren in the flesh. Opinions, thoughts, and ideas were spoken through her which were known to be contrary to her own views, and indeed the views of the whole circle. Much of what was occult or obscure was made clear. Questions thought to be most difficult were treated with ease, eloquence, refinement, and clearness, such as could be credited to but few of the most erudite and eloquent of mortals in normal condition. My own thoughts were sometimes read as in a book, and were uttered in clearer and vastly better language than could be given through the writer's attainments in English. In one or more of the future chapters trance will again be referred to in larger arenas, and this wonderful phase of spirit phenomena more fully amplified.

A period of about ten or fifteen minutes, during many of the sittings, was devoted to obtaining "spirit lights." For this kind of phenomena we had to sit either in darkness or semi-darkness. Lights then appeared in various shapes, generally like small balls of flame floating slowly and gracefully in all directions about the *seance*

room. Sometimes these illuminations were shown like butterflies' wings, often in pairs, and in several parts of the room at the same time they were of a variety of sizes from the dimension of a pea to the size of an ordinary hand, and many degrees of brilliancy, lasting but a minute or so, and then fading out as others appeared. Now and then they would divide, parts making in opposite directions. There seemed to be no heat in these bodies of apparent flame, as they often rested and faded on the naked skin without burning or even warmth, or leaving any trace or residuum; and now and again, on near approach to any of our hands the lights metamorphosed and became as human fingers with soft and gentle touch; or in nearing faces the radiances became lips with loving kisses. These pretty lights, causing so much interest in the circle, could be utilised to convey intelligence. In reply to a question, any light would methodically wave three times for "yes," and so on, according to arrangement, as with "raps." If a request were made, either mentally or verbally, by any member that a light should appear in any indicated place around the circle table, the desire would generally be almost instantly complied with. Brilliant lights often hovered between the medium and myself, as many as a dozen appearing at the same time. The lights were generally most lustrous during the time of singing

Our ordinary burner being restored, a quarter of an hour or more, at most of our meetings, was devoted to communication with the spirit world by means of raps. It is my intention further on to write a short chapter about Raps," and now postpone their consideration.

Now and again, "table moving" was tried, and met

with considerable success. Either with or without contact of hands, the table rose, tilted, kept time to music by beating on the floor or oscillating, and other vibrative impulses. Within the walls of the circle room, whether sitting close to or at a distance from the table, its movements were still similar, either with or without contact; and sometimes, no one being within two or three feet, it floated in the air.

One of our members was sensitive to external powers which guided his hand in writing communications in the circle. A spirit or more than one spirit, generally a band, controlled these manifestations of the powers of the "unseen." At some sittings the writing was but little, and at other meetings it amounted to several pages of foolscap. The writing medium held a good lead pencil in his hand, waited quietly a minute or two, a signal of "ready" was given by tiny raps on the writing paper, when the inscriptions immediately commenced, continuing line after line in rapid succession, and stopping not till the communication was complete. The member through whom the writing came thinks this one of the most simple and the easiest form of spirits' power in conveying intelligence to mortals. With an unresisting brain, and a passive arm and hand, it requires, he says, but little power (compared with other phases of spirit manifestation) for some spirits to guide hands and fingers and inscribe whatever they wish. Thus, in addition to English, some of the most ancient languages known, and foreign tongues of the present period, were written with such ease and celerity, as may not be obtainable perhaps without the control of friendly spirits. The ancient and foreign, however, were exceptional writings

but were given, no doubt, with some special object in view, possibly of showing proof to the members that the medium was but an instrument in this respect. In this form of communication we have been favoured with words of encouragement, language of reproof, and lessons in science, theology, history, etc. Week after week, for several weeks, chapter after chapter was told by a spirit who gave the name of Laurentius, and who lived in the time of Cyprian. The story of this ancient's life, as far as it has been told, is interesting, and contains narratives of a number of events of the times during the Cyprianic period. Should the work be completed in the circle, it will probably be published exactly as written.

The programme of each circle meeting usually consisted, as I have already said, of invocation, conversation and singing, spirits speaking through the trance medium, clairvoyance, spirit lights, spirit raps, automatic writing, etc. These by no means included all the kinds of manifestations our constant visitors from the Summerland choose to favor us with.

Small articles were often brought from distant parts of the house during the meeting time and laid on the table by unseen powers, whilst every material avenue to the circle room was closed.

In illustration of this power, attention may be directed to the following incidents. One evening I was the last member who arrived at the circle meeting. It was a rare occurrence for any person to be late, eight o'clock being the agreed time. I hung my hat and overcoat in the lobby, passed through the hall into a sitting room, thence into the circle room, closing the door after me. I found

all the other members seated and waiting. The usual routine was slowly advancing, and time had not stolen more than half-an-hour, when something touched me, and a moderate size book of a few hundred pages was placed over my hands on the table. The book was the identical volume that had been left in the overcoat in the lobby. At the termination of the *seance* I hastened for my outer garment, and further verified the abstraction of the Work. How was the conveyance of the book accomplished? There was no normal way left for ingress at the circle room except down the chimney. The two windows were closed and fastened, the door bolted on the inside, and all secure from interruption, and even the fire-place closed over with an ornamental screen. The conclusion to be drawn is, no mortal did this, and that it was the work of spirits who, possessed of conditions at hand, showed these abnormal phases for the "benefit of the sitters.

Under similar circumstances to the foregoing, a month or two later, the hat of a member (Mr. Bechervaise, post and telegraph master) came down from the plastered ceiling dropping on his hands. Half-an-hour previously he placed his hat on a crook in the lobby; and all the material inlets to the circle-room had been closed. Two or three of the sitters observed and spoke of a curious-looking whitish circular cloud, directly over Mr. Bechervaise's head, moving about near the ceiling. This object consolidated, and gravitated to its drawing power, the owner.

Whether absent or present, the chair used by myself at circle meetings was always placed in the same position at the table; and during periods of non-attendance, most

of the members present—sometimes all of them—declared they could see a spirit form occupy my chair and place; and, if requests were made, the chair would move backward or forward, to this side or that, or tilt, or twist around about and contrive other movements as desired.

At any time during the sittings all the members were liable to be touched by spirit hands. For a long time no *seance* went by without some or all of us being touched on the face, hands, arms, shoulders, or other divisions of the corporeal structure.

Most of the members possessed, in a greater or lesser degree, the faculty of clairvoyance. One of our band often declared that he could, in subdued light, see some of the spirits around the circle, and sometimes he minutely described their appearances. He could see and read writings in the air and on walls; perceive landscapes and other object, in crystals and glasses; and also read the individual character of persons moving in the streets. This latter power, which sometimes gave him the capacity to read, as it were, the whole career of some peoples' lives at a glance, was often so abhorrent that he tried to suppress this inherent development.

A lady member saw clairvoyantly in the circle in complete darkness, and beautiful revelations were often the result of the possession of this faculty.

Clairaudience, or the hearing of independent spirit-voices, was of rarer occurrence in our circle than clairvoyance. (I do not here refer to spirits speaking in trance mediums, and through materialisations, when all within ordinary hearing radius could hear.) Some of the members and myself occasionally heard voices at hand exterior

to any sounds made by the breath of any of the circle. Not long ago, whilst all were singing a chorus I distinctly heard a clear treble voice just over my head, quite separate from and unlike any of the sitters' voices join in caroling several lines; the member sitting next me heard the same chorister.

Hundreds of MSS. were produced in the circle, a few only of which may now be published. The), were written in the presence of the assembled members. At some future time others may be collated and printed. Here are nine of them as follows:

Oh, friends of earth!—children of our Father!—we are near you; and with upraised hands call down upon you the blessings of heaven. You are not alone in your search for truth regarding man's immortality; for thousands and tens of thousands of your brethren in the flesh and of the spirit are also searchers for the same truth. You, oh friends! have had many proofs that the life of your bodies is not all. You have seen and conversed with the denizens of the after-life, who have passed beyond the dreaded veil, and have crossed the gloomy valley of the shadow of death. Oh, death! thou mysterious something dreaded by man in his ignorance, what art thou? We, who are amongst thy supposed victims, cannot find thee! Everywhere, we see life fresh and green as from the Maker's hand. No death! No death! *No death!* is echoed through the vast universe. 'No death?' says the materialist, on quitting the bonds of clay. 'What? and have I been so deceived—so mistaken then—through my earth career? And was my boasted pride of learning

denied the smallest fact tending to prove man's soul?'

Yes! call the immortal spirit whatever you will, friends, it is a Spark of Divinity, and cannot perish! Let sceptics sneer at your belief—let dogmatists scorn your facts—and let the Christian world with whom you come in contact deny the use of the facts—surely you are sufficient masters of your own reason to give it scope, and say: If true, then the facts are worth something, and prove a discovery, by which then, oh, friends! you can say with certain truth, 'O grave, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?' Yes, friends, hold fast to the truth, and ask for more light. Bright bands will surround you if with pure hearts you ask in faith. You say, 'Why ask in faith?' Dear ones, doubt is one reason why we cannot always give proof. We say to you, be truthful, but be believing, even as little children. Good-night. J McHattie, Samuel Brown, John Angel James, Richard Baxter, B. Brodie, John Milne."

"Friends,—...We do not advise you regarding temporal things, because ye are of the earth, and know personally your own surroundings. We would rather speak of higher and more spiritual matters which pertain to the higher and your ultimate life. We know that to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, all seems so dismal to poor mortal eyes. But they cannot comprehend why when a man seems to die he will live again. No man dies; he but casts off the materiality. He remains still a personality, full of individuality and freedom of thought and action. Let no man lead you astray by vain words or ideas. An individual will always remain so to all eternity. But you may ask,

How long will that be? Can you count the grains of sand scattered on the sea shore? No, but they must be limited in number. Yes, they may be to-day, but to-morrow, do they count the same numbers? No, because every river brings to the great seas and oceans of your Earth billions of trillions of other particles. So, therefore, the grains of sand on the sea shore are like unto eternity: It has no limit; it has no end: Onwards! onwards? onwards! It says to you, I am the past, the present, and the future. When did this past begin? you will ask. Let us ask of you, When did the Great Infinite Cause begin? Matter can have had no beginning: the Cause can have had none. Finite minds cannot grasp this, because it is finity trying to grasp Infinity; and can that be possible? No! no! no!

Matter is: the cause exists. What is the cause? We say, our comprehension cannot tell you; but you in your finity, call the Cause GOD. You then wander back to your early conceptions; you search your sacred books; you try what light they will shed; but they reveal none: they are dull and cheerless. You will not be careless of our remarks; we wish only to cause you to think for yourselves and ponder over our words. At the same time, remember that we are anxious to give you a lesson. There is a Power, and that Power governs you and your surroundings. Study the Power—worship the Power. It is the highest POWER finite minds can grasp. It is, therefore, a grand thing for Infinity to stoop to finity. Good-night, dear ones. Good-night. Ever your loved companions in spirit—John Angel James, Stuart Mill, Martin Luther, Julia Brathouski, Rebecca Miller, Harriet Martineau, William Lorimer, Ellen Spiers, Fred'k Trench, and others."

"The receipt of intelligence from the world of spirits is always attended with doubt; and it is difficult to remove those doubts from the mind, whether through ordinary physical phenomena, or through those higher mental phenomena which appeal directly to reason, which sits enthroned as the arbiter or judge to each individual. You have a right to judge us by the messages you receive, and the nature of the testimony we bring you; yet you must remember that the very best human instruments are still imperfect; and much required to be told has to remain untold through that cause. There are indeed times when the recording instrument acts with perfect ease, and requires but little adjusting; and again there are times when the whole message gets spoiled in transmission. Thoughts of some kinds are transmitted with ease; and other thoughts have so much haze and accumulations round them which prevent the recording instrument receiving anything but a blurred message mixed up with part real and part imaginary, due to psychic causes which are as the recording instruments themselves. We do not desire to say more on this subject, and would not have spoken on it to-night but for the conversation you indulged in prior to taking your seats in the circle.... Ed. Vogel, M.D."

The first part of this communication being somewhat personal to the circle members, and of considerable length, is omitted, as shown by the ellipsis marks (...)

"...Soul is the ultimate of spirit, and differs from spirit as much as spirit differs from matter; and nature, through its every part, groans, aspires, and

yearns to become ultimised—sublimised—etherealised and spiritualised. When the first soul was called into existence through the evolution of spirit is matter now buried in the bosom of the remote past, at a time in the World's history when most of your learned men think your planet was but a molten mass of unshapen aqueous matter, unsolidified from the action of the internal fires which kept your planet, like a great boiling cauldron, sending forth huge bodies of vapour. Not so, friends, even then soul existed; at a period that your most erudite scientists wot not of soul was! You may ask, Did not soul come through evolution only, caused by the great Master Mind preferring development to stagnation? Certainly—yes. In His mind soul always existed. He has created no species of the human family devoid of soul. It is His will that spirits shall by evolution become soul; so surely, then, will your spirits, through evolution, become purged and etherealised until the soul shall stand forth *free* and *alone*. We desire to tell you that the nearer the spirit is to the Earth plane, the nearer it is to matter in structure and aspect; but as the spirit advances, the more devoid of its grosser particles it gets, until soul alone is the result.... Ed. Vogel."

The foregoing is but an extract from a long, communication; and the one who subscribes his name said he did not write the message on his own account, but that it was dictated to him by other spirits.—Aug. 16, 1879'.

"...Do You not see the weaker races replaced by the stronger?
Yet it does not follow that the

physically weak races are the least favoured with spiritual gifts. When the next life is revealed before the eyes of the mighty conquerors they will feel surprised to see the despised race and people, whom they spurned and trampled under foot, brighter and more beautiful than they. With what astonishment will they hear bright cheerful lessons imparted, with the eloquence of love, by those whom they looked on on Earth as their enemies. The good angels of the Father teach all His children humanity and love. They teach that the first duty of humanity is to love their enemies! and thy neighbour as thyself—in fact, to conquer self, and become less selfish, less in love with the law of self-preservation for the love of self alone.—Thos. A Becket, Richard Baxter, Ann Lee, B. Brodie.

"...Remember, each one only knows truth as it appears to him or her; therefore, never permit yourself to be deceived and misled. Be open to conviction; let your reason weigh well our words. Do not silence reason by any 'Thus saith the Lord God' of either Jewish or any other scriptures. It was truly said, that 'all scriptures were given by inspiration;' but in the course of, filtration down through the vast pages of time what changes, mutilations, and serious alterations have been made to suit the intellectual bias of the peoples of the various ages, your scriptures bear testimony. And again, no scriptures ever emanated direct from the source of Infallibility. No spirit is infallible—all have a natural bias, and may be misled, and have their reason directed

into a channel which is not absolutely correct. Remember we have all been human, and are so still in feeling, although we view all things from the higher stand of the great spirit-world which has no bounds."

This message was signed by several spirits, friends of members of the circle, and others of history.

"More numerous hosts have encompassed about your little band this evening than you can imagine, bent upon an eagerness to see the revival of lost hopes with many of us who have passed over the borderland, and found our old earth-homes as dead to us as things that are not. Oh, how sad it seems to contemplate the many sorrowing hearts who mourn without comfort and without hope. They have seen the cold earth close over all that remained of some dear one, and they think that was the only form. Oh, sadness! Hopeless, comfortless, and dejected becomes the mind of the earth child! What contrast is presented by the freed one; all bright and radiant with the smiles and the joy of long parted loved ones who gather round to welcome and to greet the newly-born denizen of the spheres. We see in your little band a bright hope for the future. We see that by constant endeavours and powerful faith ye may help to achieve wonders—a revolution in the minds of men, that they may *know* the world is not all—that lost friends, are not absent but near—that heaven is not a prison-house, but a state where men can live, love, and learn; aye, and comfort the friends they have left behind by their careful watching, and by giving counsel, advice, and

assistance in times of sickness and trouble. Hail, then the day when the bright sun of truth will dispel the night of doubt, and dread, and ignorance which has so long hung over your fair Earth—our birth-world and yours. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord.' Thus saith your scriptures. Comfort ye, you oh friends of Earth, be comforted with the knowledge that we live, and therefore ye shall live also. Strive to break down the barriers, and to tear away the veil which has hid the truth so long. Hasten on the day when the gloom and desolation of the sorrow-stricken heart shall be a matter of the past, a stain wiped out by the progress of the race. Ever yours in love, John Stewart, Richard Baxter, John Milne, S. Brown, D. Brewster, Ed. Vogel, B. Brodie, W. Curtis, R. W. C."

"Peace be with you all, and grace within your borders. Reason comprehendeth much: intuition perceiveth much; yet, at all times fall short of man's actual needs. *Needs*, friends! How little is that word understood. Man hath many needs he cares not for, and regardeth not at all. We see many weighty ones pressing down your race, sinking them even to the level of the lower creation through neglect. We refer to spiritual needs—not to those smaller material ones which are transitory and will soon pass away. Above all things, then, strive to become spiritual in your natures, and supply these needs lacking in so many. Thus far we have progressed in our remarks to show that peace would fall upon you should you attend to those needs; and peace within your

borders would follow. Oh, friends, when peace falleth upon you how charmed becomes your influence—a grace not your own, but reflected shines around you, and you thus show forth to the world of your acquaintance, which is your border, that ye are good men and true—true to your spiritual nature—true to your neighbours—true to your God—to the God of humanity a son right worthy of his honour; right worthy to have the voice from heaven proclaim to be begotten of Him, sons and daughters of the Universal Father...."



"Love is the foundation stone of truth. We do not mean to say that love is the cause of truth; we distinctly mean to say that 'love casteth out fear,' and truth doth abound in consequence. *Fear* is too often the cause of untruth. The contrary of truth is often made an apparent fact to cover something which fear of unpleasant consequences has not the courage to disclose; hence, lies are made to do service for truth. But 'perfect love' knows no fear, having no after unpleasant consequences to dread. It is the dread and fear of some unknown consequences which is the one great reason why so many fear to plunge into the great unknown waters of the great spirit world from whence there is no returning. But a true knowledge of the after life will beget a desire to live and struggle on in all the pains, miseries, and disappointments of life, knowing full well what reward will come hence the perfect love of the man, begat by knowledge, casteth out all fear; and hence the newer order of thought. No man hath seen God at any time; neither hath the

highest spirit ever seen Him who rules the armies of heaven, and who marshalls the high and countless orbs of His creation, and who has given to each a place and an appointed orbit. They maintain their orbit without fear, and go on their way rejoicing harmoniously and in the true path of Him who, in love, guides and directs all things. We know that our Father is a God of Love hence we ask Him with true sincerity of heart to help us onwards and give us more knowledge and still more light. Oh, His love sustains us! His truth is read in every blade of grass on your sphere—on every human spirit created by His power! We have not seen him; yet having not seen we love Him and reverence Him as a God of Love, and as the Spirit of truth and justice. Love is the foundation of Truth...."

"Your friend, George Wilson." [And several others.]

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT.

THE RAPPORT BOX.

We are so far from knowing all the agents of nature, and their various modes of action, that it would not be philosophical to deny any phenomena merely because in the actual state of our knowledge they are inexplicable."—La Place.

A DESIRE possessed me, as it did others in the circle, to show the world some spiritual manifestation, the reality of which could no more be doubted than the fact of St. Paul's Cathedral in the City of London.

The members of the little band of enquirers after psychic phenomena had many proofs that inanimate objects could be conveyed without visible means, and with no apparent breach for ingress, into the circle room from other rooms of the house in which they held their meetings.

I wanted, if possible, to obtain in Ballarat a copy of *The Times* newspaper on the same day as its publication in Printing House Square, London and at the same time to transmit a copy of one of the Ballarat daily newspapers to arrive in England on the day of its issue. I argued that if this could be accomplished it would be the most convincing proof of spirit power to the popular mind that had hitherto been furnished.

One other member and myself agreed to consult our spirit friends relative to this matter, who replied that it could be done provided certain conditions were complied with, and a harmonious and powerfully magnetic circle be found in England that would act in conjunction with us under like conditions.

We thought, too, that the same kind of experiment might be attempted within a less distance than to our antipodes. My friend and co-worker was then corresponding with a member of an investigating circle in Sydney, New South Wales, a distance of about seven hundred miles from Ballarat, postage time at that period three days.

On the 13th May, 1879, our spirit friends said: "We would now recommend you to write to the Glasgow circle [The circle here referred to was one in connection with Mr. David Duguid,* a well known medium of Glasgow city] and ascertain their feelings upon the subject; for you

* Mr. David Duguid, a working cabinet-maker, is known to the public as a Painting Medium. He has held *seances* with a circle of friends in Glasgow for a period extending over fifteen years; Mr. Nisbet, one of the gentlemen forming the circle, being the amanuensis. The medium received no education beyond that commonly obtained by working men; yet in trance he is enabled to write Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, and various other languages; and, in addition to this, in the same state of trance, or clairvoyance, he paints pictures on canvass, on cards, and on other kinds of material used by artists. Drawings and paintings in oil and water-colours are produced in an incredibly short time. Mr. Duguid becomes entranced; the gas being turned off, the work of painting is done in darkness through or by the hands of the medium; many pictures are however, the direct production of spirits, *i.e.*, painted within the circle without human hands being used. Numerous of these

must be made aware that to all agreements there must be two consenting parties whereas, in this case, there are pictures are in existence. Two of them have come into possession of the writer; and these have several times been placed in public exhibitions of art in Ballarat and Melbourne. The history of one of them is:—At a *seance* held in Glasgow, at which several of the members of the circle were present, together with two or three strangers who had travelled a long distance to witness this kind of reputed spirit manifestation, there was brought to the circle room for manipulation an unused photographic card obtained from a photographer whose name and address is printed on its back; this being marked, and a small piece torn from one of its corners and retained by the strangers, Mr. Duguid, in trance, took up the card, breathed on it, and placed it again on the table, with paints, brushes, etc., in sight of the witnesses; the light was turned out, and again relit in less than a minute and a quarter, when a pretty little landscape in oil colors, wet with paint, was shown as the work accomplished. The fragment separated from the corner exactly fitted. The story of the other picture, a landscape 9 inches by 7, is similar, and was produced in less than five minutes.

Through the trance mediumship of Mr. Duguid a large book of about 600 pages of closely printed matter was dictated by spirits. The volume is entitled "Hafed, Prince of Persia," and has now gone through a good many editions.

The eulogiums of the press, etc., are very numerous. A clergyman of the Church of England writes:—"Permit me to say that I have never read a volume with such absorbed interest, so deeply suggestive, and fertile in good thoughts." A London newspaper says:—"It is worth its weight in diamonds." Recently, another large volume, from the same sources, has been issued, under the title of "Hermes." Both Hafed and Hermes lived in the time of Jesus, and these two "new him more intimately, perhaps, than any other during his career in his life on the Earth.

It may be noted that these same spirits are prominent in this little book of "RUSTLINGS," and from whom the writer has received much of his spiritual education.

three to be consulted Your own [spirit] friends, who, of course, are agreeable and then we have the Glasgow circle. Should the mediums there not consent, their guides will not force them, as good results are only obtainable when all act in harmony with one another. We will, however, use our influence with them to agree to the terms you have to propose for the establishment of the rapport you desire.

Make ready for the Sydney circle a box of plain white deal, twelve inches by four inches in width and four inches in depth. Let it be padded with a lining of saw-dust, which must be well magnetised and covered-over with blue silk, which must also be magnetised. Let this be done by each member of your circle, and through your lady medium as well when in the trance sleep. Let this box be sent to the Sydney circle; and should the Glasgow circle be agreeable let them have one also; and get them, each of them to send you a similiar box made and lined in a similar manner. These boxes should be carefully kept in another box, and never handled except for the purpose of being brought to the circle-table for use. Be careful that no adverse magnetism comes in contact with the boxes, or their usefulness will be partly lost. The boxes thus constructed will retain their magnetism many years. And by each member of the circle, in addition to magnetising the saw-dust, placing a small quantity of their hair in with the padding of saw-dust the magnetic link will maintain its full value much longer and will exert a powerful influence of itself.

"Now, friends, we have fulfilled our promise,

and will do all we can to help your ideas forward. We see that you are on the right track, and will watch with much interest the result of your oft-repeated wish."

On the previous evening, May 12th, we received the following communication:...We are as desirous as any of you can be to forward the good work, which will prove to many that we are still living and can perform some services which the people of Earth will deem valuable. You have no personal idea how anxious we are to do something that would silence scepticism and cause your scientific men to know that there are many laws in nature not understood by them at present. Doubt not our ability to do so: we can perform much, provided we get the proper physical organisations to act through and upon."

The carrying out of the correspondence with the foreign circles was left in charge of the secretary of our Circle. Regarding that of the Glasgow, no reply ever came to hand.

Preparations were made for carrying out the rapport box experiment with the Sydney circle. Boxes were exchanged according to instructions. Both circles sat periodically at identically the same hour. Our Sydney friends were numerically weak, consisting of but three in embers, namely, one lady and two gentlemen, all harmonious sitters, but physically and magnetically weak on account principally of the small number composing their circle. Domestic circumstances and illness prevented their holding perfectly regular sittings. It is doubtful, too, whether they sufficiently understood all the necessary

arrangements for successfully carrying out the project. Possibly there were faults, too, on our part. No wonder, then, that the experiment requiring so much delicacy and magnetic strength was not entirely successful. The currents of magnetism between the two circles were needed to be strong, and the sitters all harmonious. The latter condition was, no doubt, good, but the magnetic power was undoubtedly insufficient. Our own circle, too, at this time was numerically weak from several causes. Our strongest member, physically and magnetically, was absent on Government business all the time we sat for the experiment.

During three or four months, at each weekly sitting the rapport box was placed on the circle-table. A newspaper, of the same date as the sitting, from the morning or evening press, was provided. At a fixed time the light in the circle was considerably toned down, when all sat very quietly. Three raps were given on the table, when the chairman took the newspaper and magnetised it, passing it on to the next member, who did likewise, and so on to the last who was the medium, generally in trance, who received the newspaper, magnetised it, raised the lid of the rapport box, and gently placed the document inside, and at once closed the box. It was then left for our spirit friends to continue the work thus begun, whilst we silently protracted each sitting a further quarter of an hour or more.

This was our usual procedure in endeavouring to carry to fruition this experiment. Our Sydney friends were supposed to be acting in a similar way.

The box was very often observed to be enveloped in a

whitish cloud. Sometimes I attentively regarded the rapport box in its position on the table, when it would gradually disappear, leaving but a blank space for several minutes, the white wood again coming slowly back into view. Lights, pretty lights of various shapes and brilliancies, often played close round about the box; whilst occasionally it would change its position on the table; and there seemed to me to be stronger than ordinary spiritual influences gathered around the circle during the time spent with this experiment. Spirit hands were frequently momentarily observed; and the medium's hand was several times gripped whilst raising the lid and placing inside the newspapers of the day.

With reference to these newspapers which were shut III the box by the circle, on several occasions they were taken entirely away. Once, one of the journals was missing for a term of three weeks, when it was brought back folded within another which had been absent a shorter time. But none were conveyed to, or received by our Sydney friends; nor did we obtain any from them through these trials.

The experiment, considered as a whole, was a failure yet the many kind and explanatory statements which our spirit friends gave to help us to understand something of the nature of the operation attempted of conveying objects through space, interested and led us to hope that the end sought will be accomplished at some future day when we can find a distant circle whose members are magnetically strong, and who will give much time, patience, intelligence, and harmony to the work, and who will unite to act *en rapport* with us.

If the Glasgow circle had enthusiastically taken the matter up, with the combined clairvoyant medical powers of the famed David Duguid and those of our own medium, which are excellent under suitable conditions, a work might have been commenced and successfully carried on by us new to the world, and continued by others in the future with grand success.

I was willing to give much time in order to hand over to the editor of the Melbourne *Argus* or Melbourne *Age*, the London *Times* on *Iday* of publication, and thus give to the public a convincing proof of spirit power and manifestation. Had the fulfilment of the attempt been accomplished, it would, I presume to say, have begun a new era in this psychological period, grand, glorious, and beautiful.

Our rapport box is now carefully stowed away. Should suitable opportunity occur for further experiments of this nature, preparations will again be made for new trials, as our spirit friends' help is promised; the conditions necessary for the work must be provided by mortals.

CHAPTER IX.

SPIRITS WRITING.

What could be more consoling than the idea that the souls of those whom we once loved were permitted to return and watch over our welfare.... A belief of this kind would, I think, be a new incentive to virtue, tendering us circumspect even in our secret moments, from the idea that those whom we once loved and honoured were invisible witnesses of all our actions.—Washington Irving.

"MY SOUL is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
AND THINE doth, like an angel, sit
Beside the helm conducting it."—Shelley.

THE whole of this chapter, except an occasional explanatory remark, and this introduction, was obtained through spirits writing by the hand of my friend ——. I was in the habit of sometimes casually calling at evening time at his residence, where we quietly sat, when the letters contained in this division were automatically written.

It is with some reluctance I gather for publication from my budget this selection from original documents. Up to the present time these writings have been kept almost secret, and I have treasured them as my very own as one might value a bundle of old love letters.

And I have been thinking that it is likely this correspondence was not strictly intended for my own exclusive

purusal, and then to be placed aside as a souvenir under lock and key.

But there were numerous verbal communications by the same spirit-author of the letters (ANNE), no other mortal but myself being present to listen, which cannot be published without encroaching on holy ground. These messages were inter-communicated in *clairvoyant* scenes in the Summerland and Spirit Spheres, and with golden-threaded *trance* addresses, which two latter phases will receive attention in future chapters.

Independently of the ordinary psychological value of these papers, the comfort the bereaved may gather from them is, in my opinion, vast; and the consideration of this has been one of the chief inducement; that has led me on to reproduce them. I cannot but be assured, too, considering there are no doubts (at least, I have none) that the matter came from the "long lost," that there is here much mental food for reflection, and much that will give hope and cause despairing hearts to rejoice.

Another incentive to publication is the hope that those who desire communion with their "departed" may see herein how that ready communication may be obtained for the diligent seeking. In some, perhaps most cases, it may be difficult to obtain convincing facts of actual spirit presence: but they come, little by little, by constant waiting; and the reward, let me assure the reader, will be worth all the pains taken.

It should, perhaps, be mentioned that the writing medium knew nothing whatever of the earthly life of the spirit ANNE who controlled his hand to write; nor was he conversant with the least incident in connection with

my own early years; and I repeat, as I said in reference to the medium Slade in trance unfolding secrets, that there are in these letters references made to things and events, trifling as some of them may have been, which I deemed myself the only keeping-place.

Verily, one can hold no secrets from, or in, the spirit-world, where thoughts are read as easily as language is understood by the intelligent here. Of this I have had many proofs; or rather, perhaps more correctly speaking, I have had many proofs that MY thoughts could be both read and written by my spirit friends and this knowledge, too, no doubt, has had the effect of assisting me to overcome my natural reticence.

In some portions of these letters the communicating spirit uses a mixture of singular and plural personal pronouns—I and WE, ME and US—caused, probably, by her writing with the help of, or in conjunction with, other spirits who accompanied her; but this was never the case in her verbal communications, in which it always seemed to me that the utterance of the first person singular pronoun possessed a deep individual intensity, felt though not emphasized.

Other CONTROLS, in addition to those here recorded, wrote letters to me, amongst whom were my mother and cousin.

March 20, 1879.

My spirit friend, Anne, informed me that she was very desirous of writing to me through my own hand. The first portion of the following letter, which contains an exhortation

to persevere by sitting alone for development is omitted. She continued:—

"How happy we feel when we can send one thought back to the loved ones of earth: the joy we experience you cannot imagine. Just fancy being in a country from whence you have no postal communication, shut up from all former much-loved friends and associates, and no means of hearing of them except by mere chance, to be suddenly surprised by the glad tidings that there is a ready means of communication established; would you not feel overjoyed? Ours, then, is the greater joy—more than yours could be. We have waited long, and patiently, and we now know that you can hear from and of us. We shall have much pleasure in speaking direct to you, as there is a pleasant prospect before us of a quick means of establishing a closer relationship through...which comes to bridge our world and yours.

..."Receive with much love our warmest acknowledgments of your steady and constant attachment to the once much-loved friend of earlier years, when the world seemed so fair and beautiful and all nature smiled upon us. What storms have since arisen which, like a dark cloud, have hidden us from one-another. Now that the clouds are breaking, and the dawning appears to our delighted eyes, let us be patient, wait, and hope on for evermore. The glorious sun of day, the bright beams from our beautiful world, will soon stream upon your vision with dazzling effulgence and glory. Ever yours in love—Anne."

..."We have much pleasure in meeting you again this evening, in the way whereby we have the power to send you a few thoughts from our sphere of life, where all is activity—each one bent upon the soul's inmost heart work all striving as best they may to usher in the kingdom of God to the souls of the dear ones still in earth life. Oh! when you repeat that beautiful prayer, 'Thy kingdom come,' are you not aware that loved ones are near you, doing their utmost to prove to you that the kingdom is come, and is, within you, if you will but lay hold of it. Dear James, the kingdom of heaven is to us a world of bliss where we can enjoy sweet and glorious communion with spirits who are blessed with wisdom received from the Father in the higher spheres. Oh, what beauties our souls dwell upon! with what glorious visions their inspired words fill our minds and delight our inmost senses! We know that our Father throws His protecting arms, which are justice, mercy, and wisdom, around His children. These, oh, beloved! are the arms of God, sufficiently large to hold in their embrace all the brotherhoods of the various worlds who have ever lived, or who shall be called into being. We must now say good-night.—Anne."

March 31, 1879.

The warmest side of our heart is said to be towards those we have the greatest interest in: then, dear, as you are the one we have the greatest interest in, our warmest side must be towards you. We have a desire to send you

a short message before you go to Melbourne.. We will meet you there as before, and deliver a message to you through the lady from whom you received one the last time you were there. Do not forget to wear the rose I loved so well when on earth: it calls back to my mind pleasant associations and agreeable thoughts when I can live over in my imagination part of my former life. You have not the slightest idea how gratified we feel at having little attentions paid to us by our friends of earth-life, even by those we did not know in the body. You know it is never too late to form pleasant associations, or to gain the good will of agreeable companions; and I, for one, have spent, many happy hours with the members of your little band; such happy hours, dear, are a foretaste of the still happier ones you will spend when you join those higher bands with whom we have already formed a link for our uniting when you pass amongst us.... Oh, the delight of communing with those bright celestial beings who come to us charged with the lore of heavenly wisdom, filled with divine love, and covered with the glorious mantles of immortal light, their faces beaming with rays drawn from the Great Father of Light, in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning...—Anne."

April 1, 1876.

...Time passes rapidly with us, as it seems to do with you when bent upon investigation of those noble, truths which are destined to regenerate the human family, and solve the many problems which puzzle and have

puzzled the minds of great thinkers amongst all nations during all periods of the world's history. We have a message to deliver, which must be given alone, when no person in a perfect state of consciousness is near to you. We will give you the message when you are in town[Melbourne,] or I might do so when you are alone. I will now say good night, dear.—Anne.

April 10, 1879.

Now, dear, we are almost alone, and I can speak through your friend. It may not afford quite the seclusion my soul most desires, yet I can say a few words.

When you were in Melbourne, many things, could be said such as cannot be done now, as we were alone and no human ear but your own being open to my inmost secret thoughts. Let me, however, express my satisfaction at this almost unexpected pleasure which the present opportunity affords. Oh, how delightful to find my simplest thoughts recorded, and to know that they can be conveyed to you as by letter. We are pleased to find you have learned so many ways in which our words can be conveyed to you. Our joy will be complete when we shall be able to convey our messages through yourself.

"Remember, we are still, in a sense, human, Although we do not wear our earthly garments, we have still the same feelings as of old, though somewhat altered—subdued by a higher knowledge through which we can trace more clearly and better, effect to cause, as we can understand and read the inmost promptings of the mind, and can, alas! at times,

see the false reason reasoning which leads to ERROR and which men, and women too, endeavour to satisfy their spirit with. Oh, how sad we have felt, at times, when reason, which is the god within, is so imposed upon by false ideas as to cause the divinity inborn to stoop beneath the power which ought at all times to hold high control, and lord it over all actions, thoughts, and desires.

"My dear James, our desire is at all times; pure and free from earthly taint. We wish to see those we loved on earth pure and spotless! and, oh, how we desire to direct the mind into all that man or angel would call purely spiritual. We do desire to spiritualise your soul, and give freedom to your spirit from the bindings of earthly desires; free the mind from distracting cares, and blend down all the coldness and selfishness of those you come in contact with in the world, by our own pure love, which is part of our being, the divine principle we have received from the Father who is in heaven. We shall now say good-night.—Anne."

April 15, 1879.

My cousin wrote through the medium an interesting letter, and was followed by my friend, as under:—

"Now, dear, cousin has finished all she had to say, and I can now write a few words.... Since I saw you, yesterday, I have seen my sister [at Southampton], and tried to get her to write to you, She hesitates a little about it. She has many cares, and old associations begin to be obliterated by the short hand

of time with. With it, frosts, snows, sunshine, and rain....Never despair, my own, you have still good things in store; although long in commencing it will come, then joy will be yours, as well as mine.

"We heed the cruel blasts which pass over our dear ones. We know that by patient steady waiting, bearing even a little, you are doing well; and by bearing You are fitting yourself for the bright inheritance in store for the loved ones of the Father. Oh, to be free to come to you and soothe down the troubled and anxious mind would afford me the greatest pleasure; it would be balm to my soul, and give joy to my spirit. You seem, at times, so sad and lonely. Why art *thou* ever sad? Why ever feel lonesome? Knowest thou not that the loved one of thy youth is close to thee, and would ever creep up to thy heart to find the protection and shelter looking for long ago? We do not desire to draw thee away from the duties which are laid upon you; we would rather encourage you to bear all with heroic fortitude and devotion. Thyself hast laid some burdens on thy, shoulders; have courage to stand up, and, with manly bearing, falter not under the load. When I think of this poor heart's secret—not here, we can have none here—I think how different all might have been had the cruel disease not landed me all too soon in this bright world. All that has passed. I live now for your advancement as well as my own. You will thus see that 'faithful until death' is a poor expression: 'faithful evermore' would be, the better one from your loving friend—Anne."

April 17, 1879.

"Nearer and nearer come to us daily. Soon, very soon, we shall speak to you face to face: then, how many tales we call tell each other, and express our thought to each other in our own way. Mine will be the duty to instruct in the manners and customs of our beautiful world, and tell you how delightfully we pass our time, and the inexpressible pleasure we have from performing those obligations which to us are a pleasure—not an irksome task. We have no duties laid upon us by way of task: they are given to us to do because we find pleasure in doing God's work in our own way; this is our pleasure and our employment. You may wonder how we become instructed in the higher laws of our being, which tend to increase our happiness. By hearing the wisdom poured from the lips of the bright bands who are our instructors and guides. They teach us even as we attempt to teach you. They instruct us in all our work; they direct our thoughts into the smooth, easy, and harmonious plan laid down for our redemption from the lower sphere to grow fitter for the higher and more perfect ones. Oh, begin by striving to redeem yourself whilst on earth; purify your mind, your thoughts, and your affections; set guards on your every thought. To us all thoughts are material; they can be felt; and let me tell you they are real. No thought ever dies: it lives; and will live again to meet you whether it be good or whether it be evil. A glance at your past life may be had in a moment, and many of the past thoughts will be lessons for your spirit; they will rise to bless or give you the lessons which, seen in the rays of the divine

sun of wisdom, will be to you lessons of infinite value. Oh, let love and wisdom regulate your thoughts; your actions will then be perfect. Now, dear, we will once more withdraw our influence, and say, good night.—Anne."