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– Third Edition –



THE MEDIUMS'
BOOK

Experimental Spiritism

THE MEDIUMS' BOOK

or
MANUAL FOR MEDIUMS AND EVOKERS

Content

SPECIAL TEACHING BY THE SPIRITS CONCERNING THE
THEORY OF ALL THE GENRES OF MANIFESTATIONS, THE MEANS
OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE INVISIBLE WORLD, THE
DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIUMSHIP, THE DIFFICULTIES AND PITFALLS
THAT MAY BE ENCOUNTERED IN THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITISM

Comprising the Continuation of the
Spirits' Book

By
Allan Kardec



Translated by Darrel W. Kimble with Marcia M. Saiz



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“The Spirits’ special teaching on the theory of all types of manifestations, the means of communication with the invisible world, the development of mediumship, and the difficulties and obstacles that may be found in the practice of Spiritism.”

“It is the sequel to The Spirits’ Book”

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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

This new translation of *The Mediums' Book* is the “sequel” to our translation of *The Spirits' Book*, and the same grammatical considerations of that work apply to this one as well. Once again, our main purpose has been to hold as closely as possible to Kardec's original style, producing neither a transliteration nor a paraphrase, but a re-textualization, rendering an acceptable English translation. We would refer the reader to our preface in our translation of *The Spirits' Book* for a brief summary of the grammatical devices that we have carried over into this one. Most notably, when referring to a single generic spirit or soul, we use the neuter pronoun *it* but use the relative pronoun *who/whom*, for example, “The spirit who revealed *itself* to us said that it wanted us to pray for *it*.” However, when referring to a named spirit, we use the appropriate personal pronoun: “John's spirit said that he wanted us to pray for *him*.”

We have also included an updated and revised version of Anna Blackwell's preface to her 1876 paraphrase translation, which has served the English-reading public for so many years.

We strongly recommend that *The Spirits' Book* be read and *studied* prior to *The Mediums' Book*. Although the subject matter of the latter work, i.e. spirit phenomena as manifested through the aid of mediums, was what drew Kardec to the study of such phenomena in the first place, and from which, under the auspices and dictation of highly evolved spirits (“the Spirits”), he compiled the materials for the former, that work serves as the doctrinal

foundation for the practical and experimental aspect of Spiritism set forth in this one.

For more information on Spiritism, Allan Kardec and the international Spiritist movement, we would refer the reader to the International Spiritist Council's website at www.spiritist.org.

Darrel Kimble
Rio de Janeiro, 2006

ANNA BLACKWELL'S PREFACE TO HER VERSION

The second volume of the Kardec series (...) addresses the experimental application of the theoretical principles laid down in *The Spirits' Book*, the first volume of that series.

Not only do these two books mutually elucidate each other, but each of them may be said to imply the other as its necessary complement, for if the principles set forth in *The Spirits' Book* are true, then the phenomena dealt with in *The Mediums' Book* must occur as a matter of course, while if the phenomena dealt with in *The Mediums' Book* really occur, their occurrence proves the truth of the principles laid down in *The Spirits' Book*, because those phenomena are, at once, inexplicable by any other theory and easily explicable with the aid of the theoretical principles set forth in that work.

The Mediums' Book is not addressed to materialists – those must be brought from materialism to spiritualism (if such is possible) by their personal ascertainment of the reality of modern Spiritist “manifestations”, and by the proof that such manifestations give for the continued existence of the souls of the deceased men and women by whom they are produced. Rather, it is addressed exclusively to those who already *believe* that there is in the human being a principle of conscious individuality that survives the body, and to those who consequently admit, first, the action of LAW in the evolution of human life, and, second, the existence of the Inscrutable Ordainer of the universe, of whose wisdom and will that

law is the expression. It is also addressed to those who are therefore prepared to admit, still further, that the providential ordaining may be expected to proceed for the advancement of our knowledge of our extra-terrestrial relations, as it does for that of the sciences, which deal with the various departments of our terrestrial life.

The science of mathematics, for instance, is open to every human being, yet it was only through the mind of a Euclid that its fundamental principles have been given to the world. Astronomy, chemistry, electricity, etc. are open to the study and investigation of everybody, yet the *basis* of each of those sciences, as of all others, has been furnished, *not* by the multitude of seekers, but by the insight of some master-mind, on whose foundations succeeding inquirers have continued to build – and this for a very simple reason.

The most superficial glance at the world around us suffices to show us that the men and women of earth are, as yet, in point of both intelligence and morality, of very slight average attainment. They therefore need to be helped forward in every department of intellectual inquiry by spirits from worlds of greater advancement, who incarnate among them from time to time for the purpose of assisting them to progress more rapidly in some given direction.

Owing to their mental and moral backwardness, men and women are slow to recognize the superiority of these providentially-given pioneers, and are prone to resent, as offensive to their egos, the suggestion that any such superiority can exist. They therefore usually “stone the prophets” before accepting their clearer insights, but since they always end up perceiving that such insights are the true ground on which the further development of each branch of science must be worked out, the progress of human knowledge, though slow, is sure. But at what rate would that progress be accomplished if every student – ignoring the ground-work furnished by the master-minds of the past – undertook to build up his or her own department of science *ab initio* for him or herself?

Or if mathematics tyros, for instance, regarded it as derogatory to their mental dignity to accept the help of a riper intellect than their own, and considered it incumbent upon them to evolve for themselves, from their own cognition, their own "Euclid"?

Applying this reasoning to the system of religious philosophy contained in Kardec's books, it is to be remarked that, although the domain of thought and experiment in regard to the existence of spirits and the information they may have to give us is open to all, the aid of some providentially-given *basis of truth* is even more imperatively needed in this new department of inquiry than in any other for the following reasons.

In the first place, because the spirits who communicate most frequently and habitually with humans are precisely those who are nearest to them in ideas and in feelings, and who, consequently, *know little more than the human beings with whom they are in sympathy*, they thus can only put forth short-sighted, discrepant and erroneous statements. In the second place, because *the true explanation of human life*, to which the phenomena of spirit-interchange are intended to lead us, *is to be bound in its connection with other modes and realms of existence* that can only be made known to us by intelligences who have reached a higher degree of knowledge and purity, and who, *not being at the command of humans*, will only transmit their teaching according to providential ordering in a center already prepared for its reception, and with the aid of the master-mind they themselves have selected as the channel of that teaching, *such a teaching will necessarily differ from the various discrepant statements of the great mass of less enlightened spirits*. In addition, the proof that such teaching is what it claims to be (*information given by high order spirits in regard to matters essential to our progress, but which, in the nature of things, we could not find out for ourselves, and which they have therefore been charged by Providence to bring to our knowledge*) *can only be found in the*

light which it throws on the nature and aim of human life, on the ways of Providence, on duty and on destiny.

All those who have *made a serious study* of the theory of existence, which Allan Kardec was employed to develop, have arrived at the conviction that it presents the proofs of authenticity and superiority just set forth as conclusive, and they therefore accept it as the fundamentals of all sciences are accepted by students: *not as exhaustive*, but as the true basis of further discovery; *not as a matter of arbitrary authority*, but on the broad ground of its intrinsic reasonableness and the satisfactory solutions it gives for the great problems of life, insoluble by any other theory.

The high moral tone of *The Mediums' Book*, as that of all Kardec's writings, is in unison with the assertion so often repeated by the Spirits – whose communications he has coordinated with such exceptional clearness and reach of thought – that *the aim* of the open interchange which is now being established between spirits and humans is not the mere gratification of curiosity, not the mere enlargement of the sphere of interesting inquiry, not even the mere giving of the certainty of our continued existence beyond the grave. *The sole aim of this interchange is, instead, the moral improvement of the human race which it will accomplish through the new light it will throw on the nature and purpose of human life.* By showing us that *our present is always the result of our past and the arbiter of our future*, and that *the acquisition of wisdom and benevolence is the sole condition of happiness*, this interchange will furnish us with the most powerful incentive to the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of kindness, and it will thus effect the gradual amelioration of humankind that is destined to transform the earth from a world of punishment and discipline, as it now is, into a portal to the happier realms of existence, to which we can only attain as the result of our intellectual and moral improvement.

No serious and intelligent student of Kardec's works has ever doubted that the theory of human progress – of which that early pioneer of the great spiritualistic movement of the present day was made to lay the foundations – will eventually be accepted as *the basis of a reasoned-out religious belief* not only by all those interested in spirit manifestations but also by the world at large. Moreover, this conviction of the providential character of the works in question – abundantly justified by the reception they have eventually commanded wherever they have been introduced – will doubtless be still further strengthened by the gradual acceptance of *The Mediums' Book* in England and the United States, and to the degree that its scope and character become known in those countries, for while the progressive development of spirit manifestation has constantly brought new confirmation to the explanations of the phenomena given in this book at so early a stage of the great movement – and *often in advance of the occurrence of the phenomena themselves* – not a single phenomenon has occurred to disprove or invalidate those explanations.

The innumerable contradictory “theories” that have been put forth *ad nauseam* by ignorant and pretentious spirits of the Umbral – “theories” that explain neither the facts of life nor those of spirit manifestations, and that cannot even account for their own production – are proven by their emptiness to be mere figments of prejudice and imagination, doomed to collapse because of their own hollowness. On the other hand, the facts of spirit manifestation – even the most admirable and important, if observed mainly as matters of personal interest or curiosity (as is too often the case), and without being connected by a theory that can unite them into a homogenous and living whole – are as incapable of yielding intellectual and moral fruit as are the sands of the seashore of producing a harvest. But a theory which coincides with and explains all these facts, and which deduces from them

the noblest intellectual and moral consequences, offers a firm and fruitful ground of truth and reality. The general acceptance of such a theory can only be a question of time.

Anna Blackwell

Paris, 1876

INTRODUCTION

Each and every day, experience confirms our opinion that the difficulties and disappointments encountered in the practice of Spiritism result from ignorance of the Science's principles. We are happy to notice that the work we have done to protect its adherents against the pitfalls of being a novitiate has been effective, and that many have avoided them by reading this work.

It is quite natural for those who have concerned themselves with Spiritism to desire to personally communicate with spirits. This work is intended to facilitate their journey, enabling them to take advantage of the fruits of our long and laborious studies, for it would be quite erroneous for someone to assume that, in order to become an expert on the subject, it is enough to simply learn how to place his or her fingers upon a table to make it turn, or to pick up a pencil to make it write.

One would be equally mistaken to expect to find in this work a universal and infallible recipe for training mediums. Although everyone already possesses the necessary inner seed qualities for becoming a medium, such qualities express themselves in varying degrees, and developing them depends on causes that are outside the human will. The rules of poetry, painting and music do not make people poets, painters or musicians if they do not have the gift in the first place. Such rules only guide them as they use their natural abilities. The same applies to this work. Its purpose is to indicate the means of developing the faculty of mediumship according to each one's abilities, and especially to guide the use of

the faculty advantageously when it is present. This is not our sole objective, however.

Alongside mediums per se, the number of individuals who are concerning themselves with spirit manifestations is increasing every day. To guide them in their observations, to point out the difficulties they could and certainly will meet in dealing with a new order of things, to initiate them into the manner of communicating with spirits, to indicate the means for receiving good communications – such is the scope we must embrace, lest our endeavor be incomplete. Thus, it should not seem surprising to encounter teachings in this work that at first may appear irrelevant – experience will prove them to be useful. After studying this book very carefully, these individuals will better understand the incidents they are sure to witness, and the language of certain spirits will then seem less strange. Since it contains practical instruction, it is not aimed exclusively at mediums, but rather to all who wish to observe spirit phenomena.

Some would have had us publish a more succinct practical manual, indicating in a few words the techniques to follow in order to communicate with spirits. These persons believe that due to its low cost a book of this nature could be more profusely disseminated and would therefore be a powerful means of advertisement, which would then result in an increase in the number of mediums. However, we think that such a work might do more harm than good – at least for the time being. Spiritist practice is surrounded by many difficulties and it is not always exempt from problems, which only a serious and thorough study can prevent. Thus, we fear that a succinct exposition might facilitate frivolous experiences, and this would only lead to regret. These are matters that are neither *appropriate* nor *prudent* to be toyed with, and we believe that we would be doing a disservice to place them within reach of the first person frivolous enough to think it would be entertaining to talk

to the dead. Instead, we will address ourselves to those who see a serious purpose in Spiritism, who understand its great importance and who do not intend to make communicating with the invisible world a mere pastime.

We had already published a *Practical Instruction Manual* to guide mediums but it is now out-of-print. Although we printed it with an eminently serious and grave objective in mind, we will not reprint it since we did not find it complete enough to clear up all the difficulties that may be encountered. Therefore, we have replaced it with this work, in which we have gathered together all the data that extensive experience and conscientious study have enabled us to acquire. We hope that it will contribute toward showing the essentially serious character of Spiritism, and also toward dissipating the idea of frivolousness and entertainment.

We will add one more important consideration: meetings where experiments are performed lightly and without full knowledge of the facts arouse very bad impressions in novices and ill-disposed individuals, and cause the problems of conveying a very wrong idea about the world of spirits, thereby encouraging ridicule and providing well-founded grounds for criticism. That is why disbelievers rarely leave such meetings convinced and why they are little disposed to recognizing the serious side of Spiritism. The ignorance and frivolousness of certain mediums has caused greater harm to the opinion of many people than one might think.

Spiritism has made great progress in only a few years, but its greatest step occurred when it entered the field of philosophy because since then it has been appreciated by enlightened persons. Nowadays, it is no longer mere entertainment, but rather a doctrine that those who used to ridicule table-turning no longer find amusing. Through our endeavors to bring it along and sustain it on such terrain, we are certain to win more dedicated adherents than through a large number of manifestations that might be open

to abuse. We see evidence of this every day in the number of such adherents who have resulted from simply reading *The Spirits' Book*.

After having set forth the philosophical aspect of the Spiritist science in *The Spirits' Book*, we offer in this work its practical aspect to those who wish to concern themselves with manifestations, whether on a personal basis or by observing the phenomena they are called to observe. They will see herein the obstacles that they may encounter, and they will thus have the means to avoid them. Although this one follows the other, these two works are to a certain point independent of each other. But to whomever wishes to seriously delve into the subject, we recommend *The Spirits' Book* be read first, because it contains fundamental principles, without which it may be difficult to understand some parts of this work.

This second edition has been much improved over the first. It has been corrected very carefully by the Spirits¹, who have added a large number of observations and instructions of utmost interest. Since it was they who revised the entire work, approving or modifying it as they saw fit, we can state that for the most part it is their work, since their contribution was not only limited to the segments actually signed by them. However, we have only indicated their names when it seemed necessary to characterize some of the more extensive expositions that proceeded from them textually. Otherwise, we would have had to mention their names on almost every page, particularly in the responses given to our questions – a procedure that did not seem worthwhile to us. It is well known that names are of little importance in such matters. What is essential is that the work as a whole corresponds to the proposed objectives. The reception given to the first edition – imperfect though that edition was – gives us hope that the present one will be no less welcomed.

¹ When we use the term “the Spirits” with a capital “S”, the text is referring to the group of highly evolved spirits involved in revealing the Spiritist Doctrine – Tr.

Even though we have added much material, including many entire chapters, we have also eliminated a few repetitious segments, such as the *Spirit Hierarchy*, which may already be found in *The Spirits' Book*. Furthermore, we have omitted from the *Glossary* whatever did not properly fit the scope of this work, and have appropriately replaced it with something more practical. Moreover, this glossary is not complete. We intend to publish one later and separately as a small dictionary of Spiritist philosophy. In this edition, however, we have preserved only new or specific words that are related to the subject at hand.

Allan Kardec
Paris, 1861

Part One



Preliminary Observations

- Chapter I Are There Spirits?
- Chapter II The Extraordinary and the
Supernatural
- Chapter III Methodology
- Chapter IV Theories

CHAPTER I



Are There Spirits?

1. The cause of doubt regarding the existence of spirits is due primarily to ignorance of their true nature. Spirits are usually imagined to have been created as a separate class of beings whose existence has not yet been proven. Many persons are only familiar with spirits because of the fantastic stories they heard as children, which would be like trying to know someone's life history by reading a novel. Apart from the absurdities that upset them, they do not try to find out if these stories, if divested of nonsensical accessories, might have some basis in truth. They do not want to put forth the effort to remove the bitter shell of the nut in order to get at the kernel inside. Therefore, they reject the whole as do those involved in religion, who, upset by certain abuses, include the whole matter under one and the same condemnation.

Whatever our idea about spirits may be, such belief is necessarily based on the existence of an intelligent principle apart from matter. This belief is incompatible with the complete denial of such a principle. Therefore, we take our departure from the existence, survival and individuality of the soul, of which *Spiritualism* offers us a dogmatic, theoretical demonstration, while *Spiritism* offers a patent demonstration. For the moment,

however, let us set aside spirit manifestations per se, and reason by induction. Let us see what consequences may result.

2. If we believe in the existence of the soul and its continued individuality after death, we must also believe that: 1) its nature is different than that of the body since once separated from the body, it can no longer retain its material properties; 2) it possesses its own consciousness because it is subject to happiness or suffering. Without consciousness, it would be an inert being, and thus its existence would be meaningless to us. If we believe this much, then it is obvious that the soul must go somewhere after death. But what becomes of it, and where in fact does it go? According to common belief, it either goes to heaven or to hell. But where are heaven and hell? It used to be said that heaven was up above and hell was down below, but where is up above and down below in the universe since we know that the earth is round and that the heavenly bodies turn in such a way that for us up above and down below are reversed every twelve hours, and that the infiniteness of outer space can be probed to incommensurable distances? It is true that we can understand low places to mean the depths of the earth, but what are such depths nowadays after they have been excavated by geology? Moreover, what should we understand by those concentric spheres called the 'heaven of fire' and the 'heaven of stars' since we have learned that our planet is not the center of the universe and that our own sun is only one among millions of other suns that shine in the infinite, each one being the center of its own planetary vortex? What has become of the importance of earth now that it has been lost in the immensity of space? And by what unjustifiable privilege would this unperceivable grain of sand, distinguishable by neither its size nor its location, nor any particular role in the cosmos, be the only one inhabited by reasoning beings? Reason itself refuses to accept such a wastefulness of the infinite, and everything tells us that other worlds must also

be inhabited. If they are inhabited, they too furnish their own contingents to the world of souls. Once again, however, what will have become of souls now that astronomy and geology have destroyed their assigned dwelling places, and especially after the rational theory of the plurality of inhabited worlds has multiplied them infinitely? Since there is no agreement between the doctrine concerning where souls are located and the scientific data, we must accept a more logical doctrine, one that does not ascribe them to any particular circumscribed locale, but which locates them throughout universal space: they form an invisible world, wherein we live, and which incessantly envelops and surrounds us. Is there anything impossible in this, anything repugnant to reason? Absolutely nothing; rather, everything tells us that it can be no other way. But what becomes of future punishment and reward if you remove the specified places where they occur? Notice that the notion of punishment and reward usually results in disbelief because it is presented under conditions that can no longer be accepted. Instead, we should state that souls derive their own happiness or misfortune from within themselves, that their fate depends on their moral condition, that the gathering together of good and attuned souls is a source of bliss, and that according to their degree of purity, they perceive and foresee things that are inaccessible to less evolved souls. Then, everyone will understand the matter without much difficulty. Additionally, state that souls only reach the highest degree through the efforts they put forth to improve themselves and after having endured the necessary trials required for their purification. Moreover, state that angels are human souls who have reached the highest degree, that all souls will reach that degree if they so will, that the angels are God's messengers, charged with overseeing the execution of the divine plan all over the universe, that they are joyous at fulfilling such a glorious mission, and you will have given their blissful state a

purpose that is more attractive than the perpetual uselessness of eternal contemplation. Finally, explain that demons are merely the souls of evil individuals who have not yet purified themselves, but who, like all others, may finally reach the state of purity, and such will seem more in harmony with the justice and benevolence of God than the doctrine of beings who were created for evil and who are irrevocably doomed to it. Once more, therein lies what the most demanding reason, the most rigorous logic and common sense can accept.

As we have seen, the souls that populate space are more precisely what we call *spirits*. Hence, *spirits* are merely human souls that have been freed of their corporeal envelope. If spirits were created as separate beings, their existence would be more hypothetical. However, in accepting the existence of souls, we must therefore accept the existence of spirits, who are nothing more than souls. And if we accept the fact that souls are everywhere, we must equally accept the fact that spirits are too. Thus, we cannot deny the existence of spirits without denying the existence of souls.

3. Of course, all this is no more than a theory that is more rational than any other, but it is a theory that contradicts neither reason nor science. Furthermore, it is corroborated by facts and is sanctioned by both logic and experience, and we have found these facts in the phenomena of spirit manifestations, which thus have provided us with patent proof of the existence and survival of the soul. Nonetheless, there are many people whose belief does not go beyond this point. They believe in the existence of souls and, consequently, in the existence of spirits, but they deny the possibility of communicating with them because – they say – immaterial beings cannot interact with matter. This doubt results from ignorance of the true nature of spirits, about which they generally have a wrong idea by considering them to be abstract, vague and undefined beings – which is not true.

Before going any further, let us consider the spirit in its union with the body. The spirit is the principal being of this union, for the spirit is the *thinking being that survives death*. The body is no more than an *accessory* for the spirit, an envelope, a garment that it abandons after having worn it. Besides this material envelope, the spirit possesses another, a semi-material envelope, which connects it to the first. At death, the spirit abandons the body but not the second covering, which we call the *perispirit*. This semi-material envelope has a human form and comprises for the spirit a fluidic, vaporous body which, although invisible to us in its normal state, still possesses some of the properties of matter. The spirit is therefore not a simple abstraction but a confined and circumscribed being, which would only need to become visible and tangible in order to resemble human creatures. Why couldn't it interact with matter? Because of the fluidity of its body? But isn't it among the most rarified fluids, such as electricity, for example, and those that we consider the most imponderable that we encounter the most powerful motive forces? Can't imponderable light cause a chemical reaction in ponderable matter? We do not yet understand the inner nature of the perispirit, but we might imagine it as being comprised of electrical substance or some other kind of matter just as subtle. Then why couldn't it have the same properties as electricity when directed by the will?

4. The existence of the soul and of God – the former deriving from the latter – comprises the foundation of the entire edifice of Spiritism. But before we can set forth any Spiritist argument, we must be sure that whomever we are discussing the matter with also accepts such a foundation. If we receive a negative response to the questions: "Do you believe in God? Do you believe you have a soul? Do you believe that the soul survives after death?", or if we receive the simple answer, "*I don't know; I would like to believe it but I'm just not sure,*" which, most of the time, is the same

as a timid denial disguised under a less categorical answer so that it does not abruptly shock what he or she regards as *respectable prejudices*, it would be useless to proceed. It would be like trying to demonstrate the properties of light to a blind person who does not believe in the existence of light, for spirit manifestations are in fact only effects of the properties of the soul. Thus, if we do not want to waste our time with our conversation partner, we will need to pursue another course of ideas.

By accepting the basic principles, not only as a *probability* but as a proven, undeniable fact, then the existence of spirits will be a natural result.

5. We must still determine if spirits can communicate with humans; that is, if they can exchange thoughts with them. But why couldn't they? What is a human being except a spirit imprisoned in a physical body? Why couldn't a free spirit communicate with a captive spirit, just as a free human can communicate with a prisoner? If we believe in the survival of the soul after death, would it be rational to deny the survival of its affections? In other words, since souls are everywhere, wouldn't it be natural to believe that a being who had loved us during life could approach us, that it might want to communicate with us and that it would utilize all the means at its disposal to do so? While it was living on the earth, didn't it act upon the matter of its body? Wasn't it the person's soul who guided the movements of his or her body? Then why, after death, would it be prevented from expressing its thought in conjunction with another spirit who is still linked to a body, just as a mute uses a person who can speak in order to be understood?

6. Let us set aside for a moment the facts we consider to be incontestable. Let us believe in the communication with spirits as a simple hypothesis. Let us ask disbelievers to prove to us, not by simple negative statements – their personal opinion cannot

be considered law – but through peremptory reasons that such communication is indeed impossible. Let us place ourselves on their turf, and since they want to observe spirit phenomena through physical laws, let them take some mathematical, physical, chemical, mechanical or physiological proof from their scientific arsenal, and demonstrate by *a* plus *b* – but always starting from the principle of the existence and survival of the soul:

1) that the being within us who thinks during earthly life no longer thinks after death;

2) that if it does think, it no longer thinks of those whom it has loved;

3) that if it does think of those whom it has loved, it nonetheless does not wish to communicate with them;

4) that if it can be anywhere it wants to be, it cannot be right here beside us;

5) that if it is right here beside us, it nevertheless cannot communicate with us;

6) that by means of its fluidic body, it cannot act upon inert matter;

7) that if it can act upon inert matter, it nonetheless cannot act upon a living being;

8) that if it can act upon a living being, it cannot guide his or her hand in order to write;

9) that if it is able to thus write, it cannot respond to questions or transmit its thought.

When Spiritism's adversaries demonstrate to us that none of this is possible, using reasons as obvious as those used by Galileo to prove that the sun does not spin around the earth, then we will admit that their doubts are well-founded. But until today, unfortunately, their entire argument may be summed up in these words: *I do not believe in it, so it is impossible*. Undoubtedly, they will retort that it is up to us to prove that the manifestations

are real. However, we have already given them such proof both through the phenomena and through reason; if they refuse either and if they even deny what they have seen with their own eyes, then it is up to them to prove that our reasoning is faulty and that the phenomena are impossible after all.

CHAPTER II



The Extraordinary and the Supernatural

7. If the belief in spirits and their manifestations were an isolated concept, the product of a theory, then it could certainly be suspected of being illusory. But who can explain to us why it may be found to be so alive among all ancient and modern cultures and in the holy books of all known religions? Some critics claim that it is because throughout history, humans have loved the extraordinary. Then we must ask: “What do you mean by extraordinary?” And they would reply, “Whatever is supernatural.” “But what do you mean by supernatural?” “Whatever is contrary to the laws of nature.” “Then you are so knowledgeable about those laws that you know how to set limits on the power of God? Very well! Then prove that the existence of spirits and their manifestations are contrary to the laws of nature, that it is not and cannot be one of those laws. Follow the Spiritist Doctrine and see if all the links of the chain do not display all the characteristics of an admirable law, which resolves everything that philosophical principles have been unable to resolve until now.”

Thought is one of the attributes of the spirit. The possibility of a spirit acting upon matter, of it impressing our senses, and

therefore of it transmitting its thought to us is a consequence (if we may so express ourselves) of its own physiological constitution. Hence, there is nothing supernatural or extraordinary about this fact. However, the idea that a person who is absolutely dead could be corporeally resuscitated, that his or her scattered remains could be rejoined to reestablish a body, well that would be extraordinary, supernatural and fantastic indeed, and would certainly be a true derogation that God could only accomplish through a miracle. There is nothing like that in the Spiritist Doctrine, however.

8. “Nevertheless,” they will say, “you claim that a spirit can lift a table and hold it up in the air without any support. Isn’t that a derogation from the law of gravity?” Yes, from the law as we have known it, but has nature already spoken her last word? Before the experiments involving the lifting power of certain gases, who would have thought that a heavy object carrying several persons could overcome the power of gravity? Wouldn’t that at first have seemed extraordinary or diabolical to a common individual? A century ago, whoever proposed to transmit a telegram to a distance of 1,500 miles and receive a response in only a few minutes would have been considered crazy. And if it had actually occurred, everyone would have believed that such a person had had the Devil under his or her orders, because back then only the Devil was capable of traveling so quickly. Under certain conditions then, why couldn’t an unknown fluid possess a property that offsets the effect of gravity on a table, just as hydrogen offsets the weight of a balloon? We should note in passing that this is only a comparison (not an assimilation), made solely to show by analogy that the lifting of a table is not physically impossible. It was precisely when learned individuals, upon observing such types of phenomena, wanted to proceed by means of assimilation that they were led astray. The phenomenon exists nonetheless and all the denials in the world cannot make it otherwise, because denial does not

constitute proof. For us, there is nothing supernatural about it, and that is all we have to say about it for now.

9. “If the fact of the phenomenon is proven,” they will say, “then, we will accept it and we will even accept the cause you attribute to it, i.e., an unknown fluid. But who can prove that spirits are involved? That is what is extraordinary and supernatural.”

To meet this objection, a full demonstration of the phenomenon would be necessary, which of course would not be plausible here; besides, it would comprise a redundancy since the phenomenon is emphasized in every other aspect of the teaching. Nevertheless, in order to sum it up in a few words, we will state that the phenomenon is theoretically based upon this principle: every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause. In practice, this means that concerning the observation of so-called spirit phenomena having given evidence of an intelligence whose cause could not have originated in matter, that this intelligence did not originate with the observers themselves (a fact that was proven from the experiments themselves) but had to be independent of them, and that since the being who produced them could not be seen, then this intelligence had to be regarded as an invisible being. Thus, proceeding from one observation to the next, we came to the conclusion that this invisible being, to whom was given the name *spirit*, was none other than the soul of an individual who used to be alive corporeally, and that death had freed this soul of its coarse visible envelope, leaving it with only an ethereal one that is invisible in its normal state. In this, then, the extraordinary and supernatural are reduced to a most simple explanation. The existence of these invisible beings having been proven, it was then shown that their action upon matter results from the nature of their fluidic envelope. This action is intelligent, since, upon dying, they lose only their body and retain the intelligence that comprises their true essence. This is the key to all the phenomena erroneously

regarded as supernatural. Therefore, the existence of spirits does not result from a preconceived theory or a hypothesis dreamed up to explain the facts, but instead it is the result of observation and the natural consequence of the existence of the soul. To deny this cause is to deny the soul and its attributes. Those who think that they can find a more rational solution for such intelligent effects, and especially that they can explain away *all the facts*, let them do so – then we can discuss the merits of both sides of the matter.

10. To those who regard matter as the sole power of nature, *anything that cannot be explained by the laws of matter is extraordinary or supernatural*, and for them, the *extraordinary* is synonymous with *superstition*. Thus, religion, which is founded on the existence of an immaterial principle, would be the fabric of superstition – they dare not say this out loud, but they mutter it under their breath, and they think they can keep up appearances by claiming that religion is necessary for people and for children in order to make them wise. Hence, we are faced with two choices: either the religious principle is true or it is false. If it is true, it is true for everybody; if it is false, it is no more beneficial for uneducated than for enlightened persons.

11. Those who attack Spiritism by calling it *extraordinary* usually find support in the materialist principle, and thus in denying every effect of an extra-material origin, they necessarily deny the existence of the soul. However, probe the depths of their thought and scrutinize the meanings of their words and you will almost always find this principle, which – even if not categorically formulated – nonetheless shines through under the guise of the rational philosophical pretense behind which they hide it. Therefore, by rejecting as extraordinary everything that results from the existence of the soul, they are at least being self-consistent. Since they do not admit the cause, they cannot admit

the effect; hence the prejudice that keeps them from judging Spiritism soundly, because they start from the principle of denying everything that is not material. But as for us, just because we claim that the effects result from the existence of the soul, must we therefore accept all the facts that are deemed to be extraordinary? Must we be the champions of all dreamers, of adepts of all sorts of utopias and eccentric theories? One would have to know very little about Spiritism to think so. However, this does not concern our adversaries, since the requirement that they must understand what they are talking about is of little interest to them.

According to them, the extraordinary is absurd; Spiritism is based upon extraordinary facts; therefore, Spiritism is absurd. For them, this is a sentence that cannot be appealed. They believe they are presenting an incontestable argument when, after erudite research into the convulsionaries of Saint-Médard, the *camisards* of Cévennes or the nuns of Loudon², they arrive at the discovery of fraudulent evidence that no one can contest. But are stories such as these the Gospel of Spiritism? Have Spiritism's supporters ever denied that charlatanism has exploited certain incidents to its own advantage? That imagination has engendered them? That fanaticism has exaggerated many of them? But Spiritism is no more responsible for extravagances that may be committed in its name than is true science for the abuses of ignorance, or true religion for the excesses of fanaticism. Many critics only judge Spiritism in the light of fairytales and popular legends, which are only its fictitious forms. That is the same as judging history in the light of historical romances or tragedies.

12. According to the most elementary logic, in order to discuss a matter it is necessary to be thoroughly familiar with it, since critics' opinions are only worth anything when they speak

² See footnote to the section heading, Convulsionaries, in pt. 2, chap. XI of *The Spirits' Book* – Tr.

with causal knowledge. Only in this way can their opinion – even when erroneous – be taken seriously. But what weight can it carry when it is applied to an unfamiliar matter? True critics must provide evidence – not just from erudition, but from a profound knowledge of the object under consideration, and with absolute impartiality of judgment. Otherwise, any minstrel could assume the right to judge Rossini and any muralist could critique Rafael.

13. Therefore, Spiritism does not accept all facts that may be regarded as extraordinary or supernatural – far from it; instead, it demonstrates the impossibility of a great number of them and the foolishness of some of the beliefs that comprise superstition per se. It is true that among the spirit phenomena that Spiritism accepts there are some that disbelievers regard as unequivocally extraordinary in nature; in other words, they represent superstition. As they wish. However, they should at least limit the discussion to these, because they have nothing to say regarding the others – they will be “preaching to the already-converted.” By criticizing what Spiritism itself refutes, they demonstrate their ignorance about the subject and they miss the mark. “But how far can Spiritist belief reach?” you will ask. Read and observe, and you will understand. Acquiring any science demands time and study. And Spiritism, which addresses the most serious questions of philosophy in every sector of the social order, and which encompasses both the physical and moral individual at the same time, is a complete science and philosophy in itself, and it cannot be assimilated in only a few hours – which is true of any other science. It would be very childish to see the whole of Spiritism in a turning table, just as it would be to see the whole of physics in a few children’s toys. For whoever does not want to remain on the surface, months and years, rather than hours, will have to be spent in order to probe all its mysteries. In light of this, decide for yourself the degree of understanding and the value of the opinions of those who assume

for themselves the right to judge simply because they have seen one or two experiments by way of entertainment or as a pastime. No doubt, they will state that they do not have the time needed for such study. As they wish. Nothing so obliges them. However, if you do not have time to learn about a matter, you cannot talk about it, let alone make judgments about it – unless you want to be accused of being irresponsible. The more elevated the position you occupy in a science, the less excusable you will be if you thoughtlessly try to address a subject with which you are unfamiliar.

14. Let us summarize our stance in the following propositions:

1) All spirit phenomena have as their principle the existence of the soul, its survival upon the death of the body and its ability to manifest itself;

2) Since they result from a law of nature, these phenomena have nothing *extraordinary* or *supernatural* about them, at least in the common meaning of these words;

3) Many events are regarded as supernatural because their cause is unknown, and having determined their true cause, Spiritism has relegated them back to the domain of natural phenomena;

4) Among the incidents called supernatural, Spiritism shows many of them to be impossible in the first place, and therefore places them amongst superstitious beliefs;

5) Although Spiritism recognizes a basis of truth for many popular beliefs, it absolutely does not accept all the fantastic stories created by the imagination;

6) To judge Spiritism by facts that it itself does not accept is to show proof of ignorance and complete disregard for the correct opinion;

7) The explanation of the phenomena accepted by Spiritism, along with their causes and moral consequences, comprise an entire science and philosophy in and of themselves, and they require serious, persevering and in-depth study;

8) Spiritism can only regard as serious critics those who have seen and studied the whole matter, who have delved into it with the patience and perseverance of a conscientious observer, who have as much understanding of the subject as the most enlightened adherent, who have not therefore acquired their understanding via literary science fiction, who will not attempt to oppose *any fact* with which they are unfamiliar or *any* argument upon which they have not meditated or have refuted only by denying it, but who use other arguments that are more preemptory; finally, those who can point to a more logical cause behind the established facts. Such critics have yet to appear.

15. We previously made reference to the word *miracle*, and a brief observation concerning the subject would not be out of place in a chapter dealing with the extraordinary.

In its primitive acceptation and according to its etymology, the word 'miracle' means something *extraordinary*, something *wonderful to behold*. But this word, like so many others, has strayed far from its original meaning and nowadays refers to (according to academia) *an act of divine power that is contrary to the common laws of nature*. Such is actually its usual acceptation and only by comparison or metaphor does it apply to common things that surprise us and whose cause is unknown to us. We have absolutely no intention of examining whether or not, under certain circumstances, God might deem it useful to derogate from the laws that have been divinely established. Our objective is solely to show that as extraordinary as spirit phenomena may be, they do not in any way derogate from those laws, nor is there any miraculous – much less extraordinary or supernatural – character about them. A miracle has no rational explanation. Spirit phenomena, on the other hand, may be explained in a most rational manner. Thus, they are not miracles, but rather simple effects that have their reason for being included among general laws. A miracle has yet

another characteristic: it is an uncommon and isolated event; thus any event that can be reproduced at will (so to speak) and by several individuals cannot be a miracle.

Science performs miracles every day in the eyes of the uncultivated. That is why it used to be that those who knew more than the common folk were regarded as witches, and since it was believed that all supra-human science was diabolical, they were burned at the stake. Nowadays we are more 'civilized' and it is sufficient to put them in an asylum!

If someone were really dead and were resuscitated by divine intervention, then, as we stated earlier, we would have a true miracle, because it would be contrary to the laws of nature. However, if the person only appeared to be dead and still preserved a fragment of *latent vitality*, and science or some magnetic action managed to reanimate him or her, then, to enlightened individuals, such would merely be a natural phenomenon. Nevertheless, in the eyes of uncultivated folk, the incident would be regarded as miraculous, and its author would either be chased with stones or venerated, depending on the character of the individuals. If in a rural area a physicist were to fly a kite rigged to attract electricity, which then caused a bolt to strike a tree, this new Prometheus would certainly be viewed as possessing some diabolical power. Moreover, one could say that, remarkably, Prometheus seems to us to have been a precursor to Benjamin Franklin, while Joshua, in making the sun – or rather, the earth – stand still, would provide us with a true miracle, because we have never heard of any magnetizer gifted with enough power to perform such a wonder.

Of all the spirit phenomena, one of the most extraordinary and indisputable, and one that most obviously demonstrates the action of hidden intelligences, involves direct writing. Despite the fact that it is produced by hidden beings, however, this particular phenomenon is no more miraculous than any of the others that

are also caused by invisible agents, for these invisible beings who inhabit space are one of the very powers of nature, a power that unceasingly acts both upon the physical and mental worlds.

By enlightening us concerning the true nature of this power, Spiritism has provided us with the key to an infinite number of occurrences that are unexplained and unexplainable matters in any other way, and which in remote times were regarded as wonders. As was the case with magnetism, Spiritism has revealed, if not an unknown law, at least a poorly understood one, or rather, a law whose effects we have always known about because they have been produced down through the ages, but whose governing law had been unknown; it was therefore ignorance of such law that gave rise to superstition. However, since the law has been understood, the extraordinary has disappeared and the phenomena have been reintegrated into the order of natural events. Hence, by enabling a table to move or the dead to write, Spiritists do not perform any more of a miracle than a doctor who revives a person on the edge of death, or a physicist who manages to attract a bolt of lightning. Anyone who intended to *perform miracles* with the help of Spiritist science would either be ignorant of the Doctrine or a charlatan.

16. Like magnetic phenomena, spirit phenomena passed as wonders before their cause was fully understood. And opinionated skeptics, i.e., those who think they have exclusive rights to reason and common sense, do not believe that something is possible if they cannot understand it, and that is why all the so-called prodigious phenomena have been the object of their ridicule. Since religion itself is full of phenomena of this kind, they do not believe in religion either, and from there it is only a small step to complete disbelief. However, since Spiritism is able to explain most of these phenomena, it justifies their very existence; thus, it has come to aid religion by demonstrating the possibility of some of the phenomena, which, even though no longer miraculous,

are nonetheless extraordinary, and God is neither more nor less powerful at not having derogated from the divine laws. How many jokes have had the levitations of St. Cupertino as their object! Nevertheless, the suspension of heavy objects in the air is an occurrence explained by Spiritist law. We have *personally* been *eye witnesses* of the St. Cupertino-type phenomenon, which Mr. Home and many other persons known to us have repeated many times. Thus, this phenomenon must also be included in the order of natural events.

17. Among the number of phenomena of this kind, apparitions should be given first place since they are the most frequent. The apparition at La Salette, about which there are divergent opinions among the clergy, is nothing remarkable to us. Assuredly, we cannot go so far as to safely affirm the reality of the event, because we have no material proof of the matter; nevertheless, we certainly consider it possible in light of the thousands of similar recent³ events with which we are familiar. We believe in them not only because we have verified their reality, but especially because we know perfectly well how they are produced. Those wishing to refer to the theory on apparitions, which we will provide further on, will see that these phenomena are as simple and plausible as an infinite number of physical phenomena that only appear prodigious when we lack the key to explaining them.

As for the actual personage that presented itself at La Salette, that is a different issue. Its identity has never been absolutely proven to us, and we only accept the fact that some kind of apparition could have appeared; the rest of the details are outside our competency to judge. Each one may keep his or her own convictions regarding the matter, but Spiritism does not need to be concerned with it. We will only state that the facts produced

³ The Mediums' Book was first published in 1861 – Tr.

by Spiritism have revealed new laws and have given us the key to a multitude of incidents that formerly seemed supernatural. If some of those supposed miraculous facts find a logical explanation in Spiritism, it is one more reason for people not to be in a hurry to deny what they do not comprehend.

Spirit phenomena have been contested by some individuals precisely because they appeared to be outside ordinary laws and because an explanation for them could not be found; however, provide them with a rational basis and there can be no more doubt. In this century, in which no one is satisfied with mere words, an explanation is therefore a powerful motive for conviction. Thus, every day we see persons who have never even witnessed one phenomenon, who have never seen a table move or a medium write, but who are nevertheless as convinced as we are solely because they have read and understood. If we had to believe only what we have actually seen with our own eyes, our convictions would be reduced to insignificance.

CHAPTER III



Methodology

18. One very natural and praiseworthy desire that adherents have, and which should always be encouraged, is that of winning converts. To make their task easier, we now intend to examine what we believe are the surest means to realize this objective without wasting any useless efforts.

We have stated that Spiritism is an complete science, an entire philosophy in and of itself. Those who would desire to become thoroughly familiar with it must first of all submit to a serious study of the subject and become persuaded that, more than any other science, it cannot be learned without commitment. As we stated earlier, Spiritism applies to all the issues that interest humankind. It is an immense field and we must above all consider it as to its consequences. Its foundation undoubtedly consists in the belief in spirits, but such belief does not make a knowledgeable Spiritist any more than a belief in God makes a theologian. Thus, let us see what might be the most suitable way to proceed in its teaching in order to most effectively bring about conviction.

Adherents need not be frightened by the word ‘teaching’; it is not solely the product of the lecture stand or podium, but it also occurs in simple conversation. Every person who tries to persuade

another by means of explanations or experiences teaches. What we want is for the teaching effort to produce results, and that is why we believe our task should be that of providing a few words of advice that may be equally beneficial to those who want to learn by themselves. They will find the means herein to most surely and quickly reach their goal.

19. It is generally believed that in order to be convincing, it is enough to simply present the facts. This would certainly appear to be the most logical approach, though experience has shown that it is not always the best, because we frequently encounter individuals who are not at all convinced by the most obvious facts. Why is this? That is what we shall try to determine.

In Spiritism, the matter of spirits is secondary and successive; it is not the starting point, and this is precisely the error into which one falls and often the reason for one's failure with certain people. Since spirits are simply human souls, the correct starting point is therefore the existence of the soul. How could materialists accept the existence of beings that live outside the material world, when they believe themselves to be only matter? How could they believe that there are spirits all around them if they do not believe there is one within themselves? It would be pointless to amass the most tangible proofs right in front of them; they would contest all of them because they do not believe in the principle.

Every teaching methodology must proceed from the known to the unknown, and for the materialist, the known is matter. Thus, before anything else, you should start with matter and try to show and convince them that there is something within them that is outside the laws of matter. In a word, *before trying to make them Spiritists, try to make them SPIRITUALISTS*. To do so, however, you need another order of facts and you must proceed to a special form of teaching via other means. If you talk to them about spirits before they are even convinced that they possess a soul, you are

starting at the end point, since they cannot accept the conclusion if they have not accepted the premise.

Therefore, before trying to convince disbelievers – even by using facts – it is advisable to make sure of their opinion concerning the soul; that is, determine if they believe that it exists, that it survives the body and retains its individuality after death. If their response is negative, it will be a waste of time to talk to them about spirits. That is the rule. We are not saying there are no exceptions, but if there are exceptions, there would have to be some other reason for those particular persons to be less resistant.

20. We must distinguish between two classes of materialists: in the first class are those who are *theoretical* materialists. There is no doubt in them, but rather absolute denial, arrived at through their own reasoning. In their view, humans are nothing more than a machine that functions while assembled, and which breaks down and leaves only a skeleton at death. Their number is happily quite restricted and they do not represent an openly declared school of thought. We do not need to point out the deplorable effects that would result for the social order if some such doctrine were popularized. We have dealt with this matter quite sufficiently in *The Spirits' Book* (no. 147 and Sect. III of the Conclusion).

When we stated that disbelievers stop doubting when faced with a rational explanation, we must make an exception of radical materialists, who deny every power and any intelligent principle apart from matter. Most of them hold to their opinion out of pride and believe that they must maintain it out of self-respect. They persist in it in spite of all evidence to the contrary because they do not want to lose face. Nothing can be done with people like these. No one should be fooled by their false expression of sincerity when they say, "Show me and I'll believe it." Then again, there are those who are more honest, who bluntly say, "Even if you show me, I won't believe it."

21. The second class of materialists, which is much more numerous than the first class, since materialism is an unnatural sentiment, includes those who are such out of indifference and, we might add, out of *a lack of something better*. These have not deliberately chosen materialism and their greatest desire is to believe, for they are tormented by uncertainty. They feel a vague aspiration about the future, but this future has been presented to them in a light that their reason cannot accept; hence their doubt, and therefore, disbelief. For them, disbelief is not based on any kind of theory. As soon as you present them with something rational, they will eagerly accept it. They are capable of understanding us, since they are closer to us than they might suppose. With the first group, do not talk about revelation or angels or heaven, because they will not understand you. Instead, place yourselves on their own turf and prove to them first of all that the laws of physiology are powerless to explain everything – the rest will follow later. The situation is otherwise when disbelief is not preconceived, because in that case, belief is not completely non-existent; rather, it remains as a latent sprout that has been choked by weeds, but which a spark can bring back to life. These individuals are like blind persons who have received their sight and are happy at seeing the light, or like a shipwreck victim who has been tossed a life preserver.

22. Alongside the materialists per se there is a third class of disbelievers who, although they are at least spiritualists in name, are no less resistant toward Spiritism: these are *ill will disbelievers*. They would feel annoyed if they had to believe because they feel that it would interfere with their tranquility in materialistic pleasures. They are afraid that their ambition might be condemned, along with their selfishness and the human vanities they love to indulge in. They shut their eyes in order not to see and they plug their ears in order not to hear. We can only pity them.

23. So as not to fail to mention it, we will point out a fourth category that may be called *self-interested or bad faith disbelievers*. They know very well what to think about Spiritism but they openly condemn it for personal interest reasons. We have nothing to say about them, nor anything to do with them. If radical materialists are in the wrong, they at least have good faith as an excuse – we can correct them by showing them their error. But with this last group, there is a bias that turns all arguments to dust. Time will take care of opening their eyes and will show them where their true interests lie – perhaps at their own cost – because, being unable to hinder the expansion of the truth, they will be swept along by the current together with the interests they had sought to safeguard.

24. In addition to these overall categories of opponents, there are many nuances, among which may be counted: *disbelievers out of cowardice*, who will find courage when they see that others have not been harmed by Spiritism; *disbelievers out of religious scruples*, whom an enlightened study will teach that Spiritism is supported by the very fundamentals of religion itself, that it respects all belief systems and that some of its effects are the awakening of the religious sentiments in those who do not already have them, and the strengthening of them in those who are irresolute; additionally, there are disbelievers out of pride, out of a contrary spirit, negligence, frivolousness, etc.

25. Let us not forget a category that we shall call *disbelievers out of deception*. It includes those who have gone from being exaggeratedly confident to disbelief because they have suffered deception. Thus, being disheartened, they have abandoned and rejected everything. They are like those who deny Spiritism in good faith because they feel they have been misled. This is nonetheless the result of both an incomplete study of Spiritism and a lack of experience. If there are those who are deceived by spirits, it is

usually because they ask them improper questions or ones they cannot answer, or because they are not enlightened enough to distinguish truth from error. Also, many people only see Spiritism as a new form of divinization and think that spirits exist for the purposes of fortune telling. In fact, frivolous and mocking spirits do not waste the opportunity to entertain themselves at these individuals' expense; thus, they promise girls that they will find marriage and assure the ambitious that they will receive honors, inheritances and hidden treasures, and so on and so forth. The result: the frequent and unpleasant deceptions that serious and prudent persons always know how to avoid.

26. The most numerous of all classes, but which cannot be included among the class of opponents, consists of *hesitant* individuals, who are usually spiritualists out of principle. Most of them have a vague intuition about spiritual ideas and they aspire toward something that they are not quite able to define – they only need to coordinate and formulate their thoughts. Spiritism appears to them like a ray of light – the clarity that dissipates the fog. Consequently, they avidly embrace it, for it sets them free from the anguish of uncertainty.

27. If we now take a look at the various categories of *believers*, we will first discover those who are *Spiritists without realizing it*. Properly speaking, these are a variety or nuance of the preceding class. Even though they have never heard of the Spiritist Doctrine per se, they have an innate sentiment about the grand principles that result from it, and this sentiment is reflected in certain passages of their writings and discourses to the extent that if you listened to them, you would believe that they were true initiates. Many examples of these individuals can be found among sacred and secular writers alike, and among poets, orators, moralists, and ancient and modern philosophers.

28. Among those who have become convinced by directly studying the subject, we may distinguish:

1) Those who believe purely and simply in the manifestations, who consider Spiritism to be a simple science of observation that demonstrates a series of more or less curious phenomena. We call them *experimental Spiritists*.

2) Those who see in Spiritism more than just the phenomena, who understand Spiritism's philosophical aspect. They believe in the morality that results from it but they fail to practice it, and the Doctrine's actual influence upon their character is thus insignificant or none at all. They do not change their habits, nor would they deprive themselves of one single pleasure. Misers remain miserly; the proud remain full of themselves; the envious and jealous remain aggressive. They see Christian charity as nothing more than a pretty maxim. They are *imperfect Spiritists*.

3) Those who are not content with only admiring Spiritist morality but who practice it and accept all its consequences. Since they are convinced that earthly existence is only a temporary trial, they try to take advantage of such a brief moment to advance on the path of progress – the only one that can lead them to a higher position in the spirit world – endeavoring to do good and subdue their evil tendencies. Friendship with them is always safe, for their firmness of conviction keeps them from all thoughts of evil. Charity is the rule of conduct among them. These are *true Spiritists*, or better still, *Christian Spiritists*.⁴

4) Finally, there are *fanatical Spiritists*. The human species would be perfect if it always preferred the good side of things. Exaggeration in any way is harmful, and in Spiritism it produces a blind and often childish confidence in the manifestations of the invisible world, leading some very easily and uncontrollably

⁴ "... the true Spiritist and the true Christian are one and the same thing, for all who practice charity are Jesus' disciples, whatever the denomination to which they belong." (Paul the Apostle, Paris, 1860. *The Gospel according to Spiritism*, chap. XV, no. 10)

to accept what reflection and examination would show to be absurd or impossible. Fanaticism does not think; it dazzles. These adherents are more noxious than useful to Spiritism's cause. They are less capable of being convincing since their judgment is rightly distrusted. They are easily fooled by fraudulent spirits or by persons who try to exploit their gullibility. If they were the only ones who had to suffer the consequences, the harm would not be so great, but the worst outcome is that, without meaning to do so, they provide disbelievers with more reasons to ridicule Spiritism than to be convinced by it, and they do not fail to impute to all the foolishness of a few. Obviously, this is neither fair nor rational, but it is well known that Spiritism's adversaries only recognize their own reason as genuine, and care little about fully understanding the object of their consideration.

29. The means of conviction vary considerably among individuals, and what persuades some will have no impression on others. Even though one person may be convinced by certain physical manifestations and another by intelligent communications, most are persuaded by reasoning. We could even say that for most of those who still cannot appreciate Spiritism through reason, the physical phenomena will have little impact. The more extraordinary the phenomena in the way they seem to depart substantially from known laws, the more opposition they encounter, and for a very simple reason: we are naturally led to doubt anything that is not sanctioned by reason. All will consider them from their own point of view and offer their own individual explanation: the materialist attributes to them a purely physical cause or a hoax; the ignorant or superstitious person, to a diabolical or supernatural cause. However, an explanation that is prepared beforehand has the effect of destroying preconceived ideas and showing at least the possibility if not the entire reality of the fact, which is thus comprehended before it is seen. So by

accepting the possibility of a fact, three-fourths of the conviction has been realized.

30. Will it be of any use at all to try to convince obstinate disbelievers? We have already stated that this will depend on the causes and nature of their disbelief. Our insistence in trying to persuade them often leads them to believe in their own self-importance, which in turn leads them to be even more obstinate. Those who are neither convinced by reasoning nor phenomena still have the trial of disbelief to endure, and we must leave to Providence the task of leading them onto the path of more favorable circumstances. There are too many other people who desire to receive the light for us to waste our time on those who reject it. Therefore, direct your efforts toward those of goodwill, who are greater in number than you might think. Your example will overcome any resistance more easily than will mere words. True Spiritists never lack an opportunity to do good: afflicted hearts to relieve, consolation to offer, desperate emotions to calm, moral reforms to instill. This is their mission, wherein they will find true satisfaction. Spiritism pervades the atmosphere; it is expanding because of the very force of circumstances and because it enables those who profess it to be happy. When its theoretic adversaries hear it resounding all around them – even among their own friends – they will come to grips with their isolation and will be forced either to fall silent or surrender.

31. In order to proceed with the teaching of Spiritism in the same manner as occurs in the other ordinary sciences, it would be necessary to review the entire string of phenomena that may be produced, starting with the simplest and then progressing successively to the most complicated. However, such would be impossible because one cannot take a course in experimental Spiritism as if it were a course in physics or chemistry. When

studying the natural sciences, one is dealing with raw matter, which can be manipulated at will, and the effects may almost certainly be controlled. But with Spiritism, one must deal with intelligences who are gifted with freedom, and who at every instant prove that they are not at all subject to our capricious whims. Thus, it is necessary to observe, to await the results and reap them as they occur. That is why we vehemently state: *all those who would flatter themselves by imagining they can obtain results at will are nothing more than ignorant persons or impostors*. That is also why *true* Spiritism will never put on exhibitions or resort to stage shows. It would moreover be illogical to suppose that spirits would ever take part in such exhibitions and submit themselves to research like objects of curiosity. Hence, the phenomena may not occur at the most desired moment, or they might occur in a much different way than what we intended. We might add further that in order to obtain them, we need persons who are endowed with special faculties, and such faculties vary widely, depending on the aptitude of each particular individual. In addition, since it is extremely rare for one and the same individual to possess all the various aptitudes, the difficulty increases due to our always having to have a truly complete collection of mediums at our disposal, which in itself would never be possible.

The way to remedy such an inconvenience is really quite simple: one only needs to begin with the theory, wherein all the phenomena are reviewed and explained, and wherein one can recognize them and understand the possibility that they will occur, and can know about the conditions under which they may be produced, and the obstacles that may be encountered. In this way, whatever may be the order in which the circumstances lead us to witness them, nothing will come as a surprise. And there is a further advantage: that of sparing those who wish to work alone from many deceptions. Being aware of the difficulties ahead

of time, they can stay alert and spare themselves from gaining experience at their own expense.

Since the time we began to concern ourselves with Spiritism, it would be difficult to determine the number of people who have approached us, and how many among these remained indifferent or disbelieving when confronted with the most obvious phenomena, only to be convinced later through a rational explanation; how many others were predisposed to accept Spiritism through their reasoning, and how many, finally, were persuaded without having witnessed anything at all, but were led to it because they comprehended it. Therefore, we speak from experience, and that is why we have affirmed that the best method of teaching Spiritism is the one that is geared toward the reason and not the eyes. This is the method we use in our lessons, and for which we congratulate ourselves.⁵

32. Studying the Spiritist theory beforehand has a further advantage in that it immediately shows the grandeur of the goal and the scope of this science. Those who first come to watch a table turn or produce raps may be inclined to ridicule it since it is difficult to imagine that a table could give rise to a doctrine meant to regenerate humankind. We have always noticed the fact that rather than being superficial, those who believe without having seen, but because they have read and comprehended, are the most thoughtful. Connecting more with the foundation than the form, they see the philosophical aspect as the most important and the phenomena per se as only accessories. They have stated that even if there were no phenomena at all, the philosophy in and of itself is the only one that can resolve the many problems that until now have been unsolvable; the only one that offers the most rational theory concerning humankind's past and future. Thus, they prefer

⁵ Our theoretical and practical teachings are always free of charge – Auth.

a doctrine that correctly explains matters to one that does not explain them or that explains them badly. Whoever would reflect on the issue will clearly understand that one could disregard the manifestations without the doctrine itself having to disappear. The manifestations corroborate and confirm the doctrine, but they do not comprise its essential foundation. The serious observer does not reject them but, on the contrary, waits for favorable circumstances that will allow him or her to witness them. Our progress is proven by the fact that before even hearing about the manifestations, many people already had an intuition about the Doctrine, which merely came to embody their ideas in a coherent whole.

33. Nevertheless, it would not be correct to say that those who begin with only the theory lack knowledge of the object of practical observation. On the contrary, they do have such knowledge and it carries more weight than if the phenomena were produced right in front of them. These involve the numerous occurrences of *spontaneous manifestations*, which we shall deal with in following chapters. There are few persons who do not know about them, or who have at least heard of them, and there are many who have experienced them without having paid proper attention to them. The theory has provided an explanation for them, and we consider such incidents to be highly important when they are supported by irrefutable testimony since one cannot attribute any kind of preparation or connivance to them. Even if artificially produced phenomena did not exist, spontaneous ones would not fail to occur, and if Spiritism only served to explain them rationally, that would be quite enough. Thus, most of those who read beforehand report their recollections of such phenomena, which are for them a confirmation of the theory.

34. From our point of view, it would be a mistake to suppose that we have ever recommended that the factual incidents

be neglected, since it was through such incidents that we arrived at the theory. It is true that we had to devote ourselves to an assiduous task that took several years and thousands of observations. However, since these incidents have served us and continue to serve us daily, it would be inconsistent on our part if we contested their importance, especially now that we have written a book to make them known. We are merely affirming the fact that apart from reason they are not enough to lead to conviction; that a prior explanation for them, which removes prejudices and shows that they are not contrary to reason, *predisposes* them to be accepted.

This fact is so certain that of ten individuals who are totally new to the matter, who watch an experimental session that followers might regard as having been quite satisfactory, nine will leave unconvinced, and perhaps a few of them will be even more skeptical than before because the experiments did not correspond to what they had expected. But just the opposite will happen with those who comprehend the manifestations through a prior theoretical understanding. Such an understanding will serve them as a means of control and nothing will surprise them – not even an unsuccessful experiment – because they will know under what conditions the phenomena may be produced, and that they must not ask for something that cannot be given. An understanding of the manifestations beforehand enables them not only to be aware of all the anomalies, but also to capture innumerable details and nuances that are almost always extremely subtle, and which will serve them as elements of conviction that could easily escape the ignorant observer. These are the reasons that have led us to admit to our experimental sessions only those persons who have been sufficiently prepared to comprehend what occurs there, because we are convinced that any others would be wasting their time or would cause us to waste ours.

35. For those who desire to acquire this preliminary understanding through our works, we recommend the following order:

1) *What Is Spiritism?*: This booklet of only a hundred pages or so presents a summary of the principles of the Spiritist Doctrine, a general overview that enables one to see the whole in a condensed picture. In only a few words, one can ascertain its objective and judge its scope. Furthermore, it presents the principal questions or objections that newcomers are usually inclined to raise. Such an initial reading, which requires but little time, is an introduction that will facilitate a more in-depth study.

2) *The Spirits' Book*: This book contains the complete Doctrine as dictated by the Spirits themselves, and contains their entire philosophy and all its moral implications. It reveals humankind's destiny and provides an initiation into the understanding of the nature of spirits and the mysteries of life beyond the grave. By reading it, one comprehends that Spiritism has a serious objective and that it is not a frivolous pastime.

3) *The Mediums' Book*: This book is intended to guide those who wish to become involved with the manifestations, and provides an understanding of the most appropriate means for communicating with spirits. It is a guide for both mediums and evokers, and supplements *The Spirits' Book*.

4) *Revue Spirite*⁶: This journal is an assorted collection of phenomenological incidents, theoretical explanations and separate excerpts, which supplement what is found in the other previously-mentioned works, somewhat comprising their practical application. It may be read simultaneously with the others, although it will be more profitable, and especially more intelligible if one reads it after having read *The Spirits' Book*.

That is the suggested order as far as we are concerned. However, those who want to understand a science completely ought to read everything that has been written about it, or at least

⁶ Unfortunately, all the back issues of this journal are available only in French and Portuguese. Thus, throughout this translation, all the author's references to it will be kept in the original French – Tr.

about its main principles, and they should not limit their reading to just one author. They should even read the pros and cons, the critiques as well as the defenses, and learn about the different theories in order to be able to judge by comparison. In this respect, we neither recommend nor criticize any work, because we do not want to influence anyone's ability to form his or her own opinion. In adding our brick to the building, we only fill our own particular niche. It is not our responsibility to be both judge and litigant, and we have no foolish pretence of being the only ones capable of spreading the Light. Rather, it is the reader's responsibility to separate the good from the bad, the correct from the erroneous.

CHAPTER IV



Theories

36. When the strange phenomena of Spiritism began to occur, or rather, when they began to recur in these latter days, they engendered more doubt than anything as to their reality and even more as to their cause. When they were verified by irrefutable testimony and by experiments that anyone could conduct, the result was that everyone had their own way of interpreting them according to their own personal ideas, beliefs and prejudices. Hence, numerous theories began to appear, which careful observation would reduce to their real worth.

Spiritism's adversaries soon saw in these differing opinions a counter-argument, alleging that Spiritists themselves were unable to agree with one another. It was a very precarious reason, however, when one considers the fact that the first few steps of any developing science are necessarily uncertain until time enables the gathering and coordinating of the facts into a set opinion. As facts become complete and better observed, premature ideas are set aside and unity of opinion is finally established – at least concerning the fundamental points if not as to all the details. Such was also the case with Spiritism, which was unable to escape this common law and which due to its very nature gave rise even more

to a diversity of interpretations. Nevertheless, we can state that in this sense, its advance has been much more rapid than that of older sciences – medicine, for example, which still continues to divide the best scholars.

37. To methodically follow a progressive order of ideas, it might be useful to investigate first the so-called *negative theories*; i.e., those proposed by the adversaries of Spiritism. We have already refuted such objections both in the Introduction and Conclusion of *The Spirits' Book*, as well as in the shorter work entitled *What Is Spiritism?* Thus, it would not be worthwhile to return to the subject in full here and we will limit ourselves to summarizing in a few words the reasons upon which the objections are based.

There are two types of spirit phenomena: those involving physical effects and those involving intelligent effects. Since they do not believe in the existence of spirits – they do not believe in anything apart from matter – it is understandable that these adversaries of Spiritism would also deny the intelligent effects. As for the physical effects, they comment on them from their own point of view and their arguments can be summed up in the four following theories.

38. THE CHARLATANISM THEORY: Among the antagonists, many attribute the physical effects to fraud due to the fact that some of them may be imitated. This supposition would turn all Spiritists into dupes and all mediums into charlatans without even considering these individuals' status, character, wisdom and honorability. If it deserved any kind of response at all, we would counter that some of the phenomena of physics have also been imitated by stage magicians, which proves nothing against the real science. Moreover, there are persons whose character dismisses any suspicion of fraud, and one would have to be completely lacking in good manners and civility to dare to

tell them to their face that they are accomplices in charlatanism. In one very respectable meeting place, a gentleman who regarded himself as well-mannered made an observation of such kind and the hostess said, "Sir, if you are not satisfied, you can get your money back at the door," and she pointed to the door, implying what would be best for him to do. Should we affirm that there have never been abuses? If so, we would have to believe that humans are perfect. Instead, they abuse everything – even what is most sanctified. Then why would some not also abuse Spiritism? But the fact that something can be used wrongly is no reason for one to prejudge it unfavorably. We can determine the good faith of others by the motives behind their actions. Where there is no profit to be made, there is no motive for charlatanism.

39. THE MADNESS THEORY: Out of condescension, some dismiss any suspicion of fraud and assert that those who are not fooled by others are nonetheless victims of self-deception, which is equivalent to calling them imbeciles. But when disbelievers are less tactful, they frankly state that it is a simple case of madness, unceremoniously attributing to themselves the sole privilege of sanity. This is the main argument of those who can come up with no better reason. Moreover, this form of criticism is proven foolish by its own frivolousness and it does not deserve the time that would be wasted in refuting it. Besides, Spiritists are hardly affected by it. They courageously follow their path, consoled by the thought that they have many people of uncontested merit as their companions in misfortune. In fact, one would have to admit that this madness, if it may be regarded as such, displays a peculiar characteristic: it seems to show a preference for reaching the most enlightened class of individuals, whom Spiritism presently counts as being by far the majority of its adherents. If among them there are a few eccentrics, they pose no more of a threat against Spiritism than do religious fanatics against religion, melomaniacs against music, or mathematical

maniacs against mathematics. All systems have their fanatics and one would have to be very obtuse to confuse the exaggeration of a system with the system itself. For a broader treatment of the issue, we would refer the reader to the booklet *What Is Spiritism?* or *The Spirits' Book*, section XV of the Introduction.

40. THE HALLUCINATION THEORY: Another opinion, which is less offensive because it has a scientific nuance, entails attributing the phenomena to an illusion of the senses. Thus, observers might be of good faith, but they see something that is not really there. When they see a table rise and remain suspended in the air without any visible support, it means that the table did not actually move. Their seeing it in the air is due to an illusion or some kind of refractory effect, like that which makes us see in the water a reflection of a star or some other object that appears to have been dislocated from its true position. That may be possible, but those who have witnessed this particular phenomenon are able to affirm that the table really was suspended because they were able to walk underneath it, which would have been quite difficult if it had not actually left the ground. Additionally, many times after having been raised, the table breaks when it hits the floor. Could that also be an optical illusion?

A well recognized physiological cause may undoubtedly make us see something turn which is not actually moving at all, or make us feel as though we are spinning when in fact we are standing still. However, when several persons are gathered around a table that is pulled by a movement that is so rapid that it is difficult to follow – some are even knocked down – could they have suddenly been overcome with vertigo like a drunkard who believes he sees his house pass right in front of him?

41. THE CRACKLING TENDON THEORY: If such were the case with the sense of sight, it would be no different

with hearing. But when all the raps are heard by an entire group, they cannot reasonably be attributed to an auditory illusion. Also, we have dismissed the whole notion of fraud, since attentive observation has proven that there was no fortuitous or material cause involved.

It is true that a learned physician has given a peremptory explanation for the matter, according to his own opinion⁷: “The cause results from the voluntary or involuntary contractions of the muscle tendon of the fibula.” And with respect to this subject he used the most complete anatomical minutiae to demonstrate the mechanism for producing these crackling noises to imitate the beating of a drum and even to perform rhythmic arias. Thus, he concluded that those who hear the raps from a table are victims of either a hoax or of an illusion. This fact in itself is nothing new. Unfortunately, for the author of that alleged discovery, his theory cannot explain away all the cases. First, let us state that those who are gifted with the strange ability to make the tendon of the fibula, or any other tendon crackle at will and play musical arias are exceptional creatures, while making tables crackle is quite common, and those who have that ability rarely have the ability to do the other. Second, the learned doctor forgot to explain how the crackling tendons of a person who is motionless and at some distance from the table can produce vibrations that may be sensed by the touch; how the crackles can be heard by the participants at will and in various areas of the table, in other furniture, in walls, in the ceiling, etc.; how, finally, the action of the tendon can extend to a table that is not being touched at all and make it move by itself. Besides, if this theory really explained anything at all, it would only invalidate the rap phenomenon,

⁷ Dr. Jobert (de Lamballe). For us to be fair, we must state that this discovery should be attributed to Mr. Schiff. Dr. Jobert only elaborated on its consequences before the Academy of Medicine in order to deal the decisive blow against spirit table-rappers. One may find all the details in *Revue Spirite* of June 1859 – Auth.

but would not apply to all the other modes of communication. Consequently, we conclude that its author has judged without having seen, or without having seen everything sufficiently. It is always lamentable that in addressing a subject they are unfamiliar with, scientists hurry to give explanations that the facts themselves belie. Their own knowledge should make them more circumspect in their judgments, especially when such knowledge broadens the boundaries of the unknown.

42. THE PHYSICAL CAUSE THEORY: From this point on, we will leave behind the theories of absolute denial. Having admitted the reality of the phenomena, the first thought that naturally occurred to those who witnessed them was to attribute the movements to magnetism, electricity or the action of some kind of fluid, i.e., to an exclusively material and physical cause. There was nothing unreasonable about this theory and it would have prevailed if the phenomena had been limited to purely mechanical effects. A circumstance that even seemed to corroborate it in certain cases was the increase in the phenomena's power because of the number of individuals present in that each one of them could be seen as an element of a human electric battery. As we have already stated, what characterizes a true theory is its ability to explain all the facts. If one single fact contradicts it, it is because it is wrong, incomplete or too rigid – which is what applied in this case. The movements and raps revealed signs of intelligence in that they obeyed a will and responded to thought. Thus, they had to have an intelligent cause behind them, and since the effect ceased to be merely physical, the cause itself had to be something other than physical. Therefore, the theory of an *exclusive* action by a material agent was abandoned and now only resurfaces among those who make an *a priori* judgment without having seen anything. Hence, the crucial point is to attest to an intelligent action, a point that can convince whomever wants to make the effort to observe.

43. THE REFLECTION THEORY: Once it was recognized that an intelligent action was involved, the source of that intelligence still had to be determined. It was thought that it might be the intelligence of the medium or the participants themselves, which was then reflected like light or sound waves. This was quite possible and only experience would finally be able to provide the last word on the matter. Before long, however, we noticed that this theory was completely removed from any purely materialistic idea; in order for the intelligence of the participants to be reproduced indirectly, it would be necessary to admit the existence in human beings of a principle that was independent of their organism.

If the thought that was expressed were always that of the participants, the reflection theory could be confirmed. But even reduced to such a proportion, wouldn't the phenomenon be of greatest interest? Wouldn't it be remarkable if thought could resound within an inert object and translate itself into motion and sound? Wouldn't there be something about it that might arouse the curiosity of scholars? Then why do those who exhaust themselves searching for a nerve fiber disdain this subject so much?

As we have stated, only experience could provide the last word concerning this theory, and experience has disproved it instead, because in each instance and by the most positive facts it has shown that the thought thus expressed might not only be foreign to the thought of the participants, but is often completely contrary to it. This contradicts all preconceived ideas and frustrates all expectations. In fact, when I think 'white' but receive 'black' in response, I cannot believe that the response is actually my own. Some opponents find support in cases where the thought that is expressed and the thought of the participants are identical. But what does that prove except that the participants can think like the communicating intelligence? We do not mean that they must

always be different from each other. During a conversation, when the person you are speaking with expresses a thought similar to your own, do you say that his or her thought had come from you? It only requires a few contrary and well proven examples to show that this theory is incomplete.

Furthermore, how can one use the thought reflection theory to explain the writing produced by persons who do not even know how to write; responses of the highest philosophical reach expressed through illiterate individuals; answers given to mental, non-verbal questions or formulated in a language unknown by the medium, or a thousand other facts that can leave no doubt as to the independence of the manifesting intelligence? Any contrary opinion could only result from a deficient observation.

If the presence of an outside intelligence is *mentally* proven by the nature of the responses, it is *physically* proven by the phenomenon of direct writing; i.e., writing that is produced spontaneously without a pen or pencil, without being touched and in spite of all the precautions taken to avoid any kind of trickery. The intelligent character of this phenomenon cannot be put in doubt; thus, there is more than simple fluidic action involved. Moreover, the spontaneity of the thought that is expressed independently of all expectations and apart from any formulated question prevents it from being seen as a reflection of the participants' thoughts.

The reflection theory is quite unflattering in certain cases. When a group of honest individuals in a meeting unexpectedly receives a grossly revolting communication, attributing it to one of them would be committing a serious indelicacy, and everyone would no doubt promptly repudiate the notion (See *The Spirits' Book*, sect. XVI of the Introduction).

44. THE COLLECTIVE SOUL THEORY: This is a variation of the preceding one. According to this theory, it is only the medium's soul that actually expresses itself, but it identifies

itself with the souls of many other persons, who may be present or absent, thereby forming a *collective whole* that brings together the aptitudes, intelligence and knowledge of each person. However, the brochure that divulges this theory, entitled *La lumière*⁸, seems to be in a style that is rather obscure. We must confess at having comprehended little of what we read, and only cite this work from memory. Besides, this theory represents more of an individual opinion – like so many others – and it has won few adherents. *Emah Tirpsé* is the name used by the author to designate the collective being, whom he represents. His motto is: *there is nothing hidden that must not be revealed*. This proposition, however, is obviously wrong, since there are an infinite number of things that humans cannot and must not know about. One would be presumptuous indeed to claim to be able to penetrate all the secrets of God.

45. SOMNAMBULISM THEORY: This theory used to have many adherents and even now it still has a few. Like the Collective Soul theory, this one holds that all the intelligent communications proceed from the soul or spirit of the mediums themselves. However, in order to explain how mediums can address subjects that are outside their realm of understanding, rather than considering them as having a collective soul, it attributes it to a momentary over-stimulation of the mediums' mental faculties; in other words, a sort of somnambulistic or ecstatic state that excites and develops their intelligence. One cannot deny that, in certain cases, such a cause could have an influence, but it would be quite enough to have seen how the majority of these mediums operate in order to understand that this theory cannot resolve all the cases – it is the exception rather than the rule. It could be the answer if mediums always possessed the air of a visionary or an ecstatic, an

⁸ "Communion: La lumière du phénomène de L'Esprit. Tables parlantes, somnambules, mediums, miracles. Magnétisme spirituel: puissance de la pratique de la foi. By Emah Tirpsé, une âme collective écrivant par l'intermédiaire d'une planchette." Brussels, 1858, Devroye –Auth.

appearance that they could simulate perfectly if they wanted to put on a comedy show. But where does the inspiration come from when mediums write like a machine and without any awareness of what they are receiving, without any emotion, without being at all concerned with what they are doing, all in an entirely distracted manner – even laughing and dealing with other matters at the same time? One might understand the over-excitation of thought, but not how it could enable mediums to write who do not know how to, and even less when the communications are transmitted through raps or with the help of a planchette or basket. Over the course of this work, we shall see what cause must be attributed to the influence of the mediums' ideas. But the cases in which the outside intelligence is revealed through uncontestable signs are so numerous and obvious that they can leave no doubt as to their true origin. The error of most of the theories that appeared at the beginning of Spiritism lay in the drawing of generalized conclusions from a few isolated incidents.

46. THE PESSIMISTIC, DIABOLICAL OR DEMONIC THEORY: Here we shall enter upon another order of ideas. Having proven the intervention of an outside intelligence, it was then necessary to try to understand its nature. The easiest means would undoubtedly have been to simply ask it, but certain individuals did not see this as a sufficient guarantee; instead, they preferred to see all the manifestations as the work of the Devil. According to them, only the Devil or demons could communicate in such a manner. Although this theory is little-accepted nowadays, it enjoyed some credit for awhile in virtue of the special character of those who sought to make it prevail. We would point out, ironically, that the adherents of the demoniac theory should not be regarded as being among Spiritism's adversaries, but rather just the opposite. Whether they are demons or angels, the beings who communicate are always incorporeal; thus, admitting the manifestation of demons

is the same as admitting the possibility of communicating with the invisible world, or at least with a segment of that world.

As unreasonable as it may be, believing that such communications are the exclusive product of demons would not appear to be impossible as long as spirits were considered as beings who were created outside the scope of humankind. However, since we know that spirits are only the souls of those who have already lived, this theory has lost all its prestige, and, one might add, all likelihood of being true, for it would mean that all such souls are demons, whether they are the souls of fathers, children or friends, and that we ourselves will become demons when we die. Consequently, to many people it is not a very flattering or consoling doctrine. It would be very difficult to convince a mother that a dear child whom she has lost, and who, after death, came to provide her with proof of its affection and identity, was actually a fiend instead. It is true that among spirits there are those who are quite evil and who deserve no more than to be called *demons*, and for a very simple reason: there are humans who are quite evil and death brings them no immediate improvement. The issue is to know whether it is only they who can communicate with us. To those who believe so, we would propose the following questions:

- 1) Are there both good and evil spirits?
- 2) Is God more powerful than evil spirits – or demons, if you prefer?
- 3) Affirming that only evil spirits communicate is the same as saying that good spirits cannot. If such is the case, then it either happens by God's will or against it. If it is against God's will, then evil spirits are more powerful than God. If it is by God's will, then why, in all the divine goodness, wouldn't God allow good spirits to communicate in order to offset the influence of the others?
- 4) What proof can you give of the impossibility of good spirits to communicate?

5) When we confront you with the wisdom displayed by some of the communications, you respond that the Devil uses every sort of mask in order to better seduce us. We recognize the fact that there are hypocritical spirits who coat their language with the varnish of wisdom, but would you hold that ignorance can mimic true wisdom and that an evil nature can imitate virtue without revealing the fraud?

6) If only the Devil can communicate, and since he is the enemy of both God and humans, then why do spirits recommend praying to God, submitting to the divine will, enduring the tribulations of life without complaining, not pursuing honor or wealth, and practicing charity and all the maxims of Christ; in a word, doing everything that is necessary to destroy the Devil's empire? If it is the Devil who offers all these counsels, we must agree that no matter how cunning he may be, he would have to be quite incompetent to supply ammunition against himself.⁹

7) If spirits communicate, it is because God allows it. Since both good and evil communications are received, isn't it more logical to think that God allows the evil ones to test us and the others to offer us wise counsel?

8) What would you think of a father who left his children at the mercy of pernicious examples and counsels, who withdrew from them, who prohibited them from seeking out individuals who could turn them from evil? Should we believe that God, who is goodness par excellence, would do what a good father or any other person would not?

9) The Church affirms the authenticity of certain manifestations of the Virgin and other saints in the form of

⁹ This question is addressed in *The Spirits' Book* (Nos. 128 ff). However, with respect to this subject, as well as everything that concerns religion, we recommend the booklet entitled *Lettre d'un catholique sur le spiritisme* by Dr. Grand, former French consul, along with what we ourselves will publish under the title *LES CONTRADICTEURS DU SPIRITISME au point de vue de la religion, de la science et du matérialisme* – Auth.

apparitions, visions, oral communications, etc. Doesn't this belief contradict the doctrine that only demons communicate?

We believe that some persons have professed this theory in good faith, but we also believe that many have done so for the sole purpose of avoiding being concerned with such matters because of the evil communications which everyone is subject to receiving. By stating that only the Devil manifests, they wish to scare people as they would a child: "Don't touch that; you'll get burned!" Perhaps the intention is praiseworthy but it does not meet its objective, since prohibiting something only serves to arouse one's curiosity, and the fear of the Devil only stops a few people. In fact, most of them would actually like to see him, if for no other reason than to see what he looks like, and they would be amazed to find out that he is not as ugly as they had thought he would be.

Mightn't there be a further motive behind this theory that communications derive exclusively from the Devil himself? There are persons who regard all who do not think as they do to be in error. Isn't it possible that those who hold that spirit communications are the work of demons are afraid that spirits might not agree with them, especially on issues concerning this world rather than those concerning the other? Since they cannot deny the facts, they try to present them in as frightening a manner as possible. This method, however, does not produce any better results than any of the others, and where fear of the ridiculous is powerless, it is best to allow things to run their course.

A Muslim who heard a spirit speak against certain laws of the Koran would surely believe it was an evil spirit. The same would apply to a Jew concerning certain practices of the Law of Moses. As for Catholics, we heard one of them state that the communicating spirit was the *Devil* because he thought differently concerning the temporal power¹⁰, even though this spirit only preached charity,

¹⁰ That is, the power of the Pope to become involved in and decide secular matters – Tr.

tolerance, love for one's neighbor and abnegation of worldly affairs, all in harmony with the maxims proclaimed by Christ.

Since spirits are but human souls, and, as such, not perfect, it stands to reason that there are equally imperfect spirits whose character is reflected in their communications. It is undeniable that there are evil, cunning and profoundly hypocritical spirits whom we must guard ourselves against. However, simply because there are perverse individuals in this world, would that be any reason for us to run from societal life? God has given us reason and discernment for judging both spirits and humans. The best way to avoid the possible inconveniences that Spiritist practice may present is not to prohibit them but rather to clarify them. An imaginary fear can only make a momentary impression and it will not affect everybody, while, on the other hand, a clearly demonstrated reality is indeed comprehensible to all.

47. THE OPTIMISTIC THEORY: Alongside the theories that only see spirit phenomena as being the work of demons, there are others that see them only as the work of good spirits. Such theories start from the principle that, being released from matter, the soul is now free of any kind of veil and must therefore be possessed of supreme knowledge and wisdom. However, this blind confidence in the absolute superiority of the beings of the invisible world has been a source of numerous deceptions for many people. At their own expense, they have had to learn to distrust certain spirits, just as they have learned to distrust certain individuals.

48. THE UNI-SPIRIT OR MONO-SPIRIT THEORY: A variety of the optimistic theory is the belief that there is one sole spirit who communicates with humans, and that this spirit is Christ, the protector of the earth. However, when communications are of the lowest triviality, of a revolting grossness, full of malevolence and malice, it would be impious and profane to suppose that they

could have emanated from the Spirit of Goodness par excellence. If those who believe in this theory had received only impeccable communications, we could possibly accept their illusion. But most of them declare that they have received extremely evil communications, trying to explain them away as a test to which the Spirit of Goodness has submitted them by dictating absurdities to them. Thus, while some attribute all communications to the Devil, who is able to make *good* statements in order to tempt them, others believe that Jesus is the only one who manifests himself, but that he can make *evil* statements in order to test them. What shall decide between these two very diverse opinions? Common sense and experience. We cite experience because it is impossible for those who adopt such exclusive ideas to have sufficiently verified everything.

When we confront them with cases of identification that attest to the presence of relatives, friends or acquaintances through written, visual and other means of communication, they respond that it is always the same spirit: the Devil, according to some, or Christ, according to others – who assumes all forms. But they give no reason as to why other spirits cannot communicate, or why the Spirit of Truth would come to fool us under false appearances in order to deceive a poor mother by pretending to be the child whom she is mourning. Reason refuses to admit that the holiest of all spirits would come to put on such a dark comedy act. Furthermore, doesn't denying the possibility of any other form of communication take from Spiritism its kindest characteristic: the consoling of the afflicted? We would simply state that such a theory is irrational and could not endure a serious examination.

49. THE MULTI-SPIRIT OR POLYSPIRIT THEORY: All the theories that we have examined, including the ones that deny spirit phenomena, are based on certain incomplete or badly interpreted observations. If a house is red on one side and white on the other, whoever had seen only one side or the other would

affirm that it was either only red or only white, and would thus be both right and wrong at the same time. But whoever had seen both sides of the house would say that it is red and white and would be the only one aware of the real truth. The same applies regarding opinions about Spiritism: they can be correct concerning certain aspects but wrong if they generalize what is only a part by regarding as a rule what is actually only an exception, or interpreting as a whole what is really only a part. That is why we have stated that those who desire to seriously study this science must observe it a great deal and for a long time, because only time will enable them to ascertain the details, notice the delicate nuances and observe an infinite number of characteristic facts that will shine like luminous rays of light. However, if they remain on the surface, they will expose themselves to making a premature and thus erroneous judgment.

Let us take a look at the general results which we have arrived at by making a complete observation of the subject, and which as of today have formulated the belief, so to speak, in the universality of spirits, for all the above-listed restrictive theories are no more than isolated opinions:

1) Spirit phenomena are produced by extra-corporeal intelligences, that is, by spirits.

2) Spirits comprise the invisible world and are everywhere; they populate space to infinity; there are spirits who constantly surround us and with whom we are always in contact.

3) Spirits continuously act both upon the physical and mental worlds, and they are one of the powers of nature.

4) Spirits were not created as a separate class of entities: they are the souls of those who have lived either on the earth or on other worlds, and who have shed their corporeal envelope. Hence, it follows that the souls of men and women are incarnate spirits, who at death become spirits once again.

5) There are spirits of every degree of goodness and malice, of wisdom and ignorance.

6) They are subject to the law of progress and all may achieve perfection, but depending on how they employ their free will, they will achieve it in a short time or a long time, according to their own efforts and volition.

7) They are happy or unhappy, depending on the amount of good or evil they did during their lifetime and the degree of development they achieved; perfect and unalloyed happiness is only attained by those who have reached the highest degree of purification.

8) Under certain circumstances, all spirits can manifest themselves to humans, and the number of those who can communicate is unlimited.

9) Spirits communicate through mediums, who serve as their instruments and interpreters.

10) One can recognize whether spirits are more evolved or less evolved by their language: good spirits only offer good counsel and say only good things – everything attests to their advancement; evil spirits deceive and all their words bear the stamp of imperfection and ignorance.

The various degrees through which spirits pass comprise the *Spirit Hierarchy* (*The Spirits' Book*, pt. 2, chap. 1, no. 100). The study of this classification system is indispensable for evaluating both the nature of the spirits who manifest and their good and bad qualities.

50. MATERIAL SOUL THEORY: This theory consists solely of a particular opinion about the essential nature of the soul, according to which the soul and the perispirit are not distinct from each other, or, rather, the perispirit is the soul itself, which is gradually purified through several transmigrations like alcohol is purified through several distillations. In the Spiritist Doctrine,

however, the perispirit is considered as simply being the fluidic envelope of the soul or spirit. Since the perispirit is a type of matter, albeit highly etherealized, then for the theory in question the soul would also be of a nature that is more material or less so, according to its degree of purification.

This principle does not invalidate any of the fundamental principles of the Spiritist Doctrine, since nothing changes in relation to the soul's destiny. The conditions for its future happiness are exactly the same, with the soul and perispirit forming a whole known as the *spirit*, like the germ and perisperm form a unity known as the *fruit*. The entire matter may be reduced to regarding the whole as homogenous instead of being composed of two distinct parts.

As can be seen, this issue is of little consequence and we would not have addressed it at all if we had not encountered persons who were inclined to see a new school where, in fact, there was nothing more than a simple interpretation of words. This theory is quite restricted, but even if it were not, it would no more mean that there is a schism among Spiritists than the two theories about the emission or the undulations of light would indicate a division among physicists. Those who want to go their separate ways over such a childish issue prove that they give more importance to accessories than to the principle itself, and they are incited to dissension by spirits who cannot be good, for good spirits would never want to sow the seeds of acrimony and discord. For that reason, we have urged all true Spiritists to guard themselves against such suggestions and not to attach a greater importance to certain details than they deserve – the core is what is essential.

Nevertheless, we believe we should mention a few words about what those who hold the soul and the perispirit as being two distinct principles base their opinion upon. It is based upon the teaching of spirits themselves, who have never differed in this

respect. We are alluding to enlightened spirits, however, because among spirits in general there are many who do not know any more, and even many who know much less, than human beings know, while the opposing theory is a human conception. We neither invented nor dreamed up the existence of the perispirit in order to explain spirit phenomena. Its existence was revealed to us by the Spirits themselves and observation confirmed it (*The Spirits' Book*, no. 93). It was further supported by studying the sensations of spirits (*ibid.* no. 257), and especially in the phenomena involving tangible apparitions, which for others would imply the solidification and subsequent desaggregation of the elements comprising the soul and, consequently, its disorganization.

Furthermore, it would be necessary to admit that such matter [that of apparitions], which could become perceptible to our senses, is the intelligent principle itself, which would be no more rational than confusing the body with the soul or clothing with the body. As for the inmost nature of the soul, we know nothing. When we state that it is *immaterial*, we must understand the term in a relative and not in an absolute sense, because absolute immateriality would be nothingness – the soul or spirit is something, however. What we mean to say, therefore, is that its essence is so highly evolved that there is absolutely no analogy to what we call matter *per se*, and that is why for us it is immaterial (*ibid.* nos. 23 and 82).

51. Following is the response by one spirit with regards to the matter:

“What some call the *perispirit* is the same as what others call the fluidic material envelope. So that I may make myself understood in the most logical manner, I would state that this fluid is the perfectibility of the senses, the extension of both sight and thought. But I am referring to highly evolved spirits.

“As for imperfect spirits, they are still completely impregnated with earthly fluids; thus, they are matter as you understand it.

Consequently, they experience hunger, cold, etc., experiences that cannot touch high order spirits, since the earthly fluids have already been distilled out of their thought, i.e., their soul. In order to progress, the soul always requires an agent, without which it would appear to be nothing to you, or better, you would not be able to conceive of it. We errant spirits regard the perispirit as the agent through which we communicate with you, whether indirectly by means of your body or perispirit, or directly with your soul; hence, the infinite variety of both mediums and communications.

“As for the scientific standpoint, i.e., the very essence of the perispirit itself, that is another subject. First, you should understand its logical possibility. That would leave a discussion on the nature of the fluids, which is inexplicable for now, since science does not yet know enough about them, but will finally understand them if it wishes to keep pace with Spiritism. The perispirit may vary and change infinitely, whereas the soul is the intelligence – its nature does not change. Do not go any farther with this subject, for it is a question that cannot yet be explained. Don’t you realize that I too am investigating the matter as you are? You are researching the perispirit, while we are currently researching the soul. Therefore, wait.”

Lamennais

Thus, spirits whom we may regard as advanced have not yet been able to probe the nature of the soul, so how could we ourselves possibly do so? It would therefore be a waste of time to scrutinize the beginning of things, which, as *The Spirits’ Book* (nos. 17 and 49) teaches, belongs to the secrets of God. To intend to discover through Spiritism what is still beyond the reach of humankind in general would be to divert it from its true objective; it would be like a child who wanted to know as much as a grown-up. The essential thing is for humans to apply Spiritism to their

moral perfection process; anything else is mere sterile curiosity and almost always implies pride, which if satisfied, would not enable them to advance even one step. The sole means of advancing is by morally improving ourselves.

The Spirits who dictated the book that bears their name have proven their own wisdom by respecting the limits that God will not allow them to exceed concerning the beginning of things, leaving to theorizing and presumptuous spirits the responsibility of premature and erroneous hypotheses, which are more fascinating than serious, and which someday will fall before the impact of reason like so many others that have arisen from the human mind. They have only stated what is truly necessary so that men and women may comprehend the future that awaits them and thus be encouraged to practice goodness. (See following, in the second sect. of chap. I: *The Action of Spirits upon Matter*)

Part Two



Spirit Manifestations

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CHAPTER I



The Action of Spirits upon Matter

52. Now that we have rejected the materialist theory because it is condemned both by reason and the facts, we must now determine whether or not the soul, after death, can manifest itself to the living. Thus reduced to its simplest expression, the issue becomes very easy to address. First, we must ask why the intelligent beings, who, to some extent, live amongst us (although invisible by nature), could not somehow make their presence felt in some manner. Common sense tells us that there is nothing completely impossible about the idea, which in itself is at least something to start with. Moreover, this belief has the acceptance of all cultures in its favor because we find that it has been held everywhere and in all ages. In addition, an intuitive idea could not have become so widespread or have survived down through time without having some reason behind it. It is also sanctioned by the testimony of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers, and it took the skepticism and materialism of our own century to relegate it to the area of superstitious ideas. Therefore, if we are in error, those authorities are equally so.

But these are only philosophical considerations. One cause above all others has contributed to fortifying doubt in an era that is as positive as ours, in which everyone needs to know everything, and in which everyone wants to know the why and how of all things. That cause is ignorance concerning the nature of spirits and of the means through which they are able to manifest themselves. Once this understanding is acquired, the fact of such manifestations presents nothing surprising and falls into line with the order of natural events.

53. The idea that people normally have about spirits makes the phenomenon of spirit manifestations seem incomprehensible at first. Such a phenomenon cannot occur without the action of a spirit upon matter, and that is why those who regard spirits as completely lacking in matter ask, with apparently good reason, how they can act physically upon it. This is precisely the error, however, for a spirit is not an abstraction but rather a defined, limited and circumscribed being. A spirit while incarnated in a body comprises the soul; when it leaves the body behind at death, however, it is not deprived of its entire envelope. All spirits have told us that they retain the human form and, in fact, when they appear to us, it is in this form that we recognize them.

Let us closely examine the moment in which they have just left life behind. They find themselves in a state of confusion; everything is unclear around them; they see their own whole or mutilated body – depending on the type of death; on the other hand, they feel themselves alive; something tells them that that body lying there belongs to them, but they cannot understand how they can be separate from it. They continue to see themselves in their previous shape, and this sight provokes a strange delusion in some spirits for a certain length of time: they regard themselves as still among the living. They lack enough experience with this new state to be fully convinced of the reality of the situation.

When this first moment of confusion dissipates, however, the body seems like old, worn out clothing from which they have freed themselves and no longer want. They feel lighter and relieved of a burden. They no longer suffer from any physical pain and they are delighted at being able to rise and move through space, as they had already done many times in their dreams when they were alive.¹¹ Nevertheless, in spite of the lack of a body, they notice they have retained their personality. They have a form that neither bothers nor embarrasses them; finally, they are conscious of their *Self* and their individuality. What are we to conclude from all this? That the soul does not leave everything behind in the grave, but takes something along with it instead.

54. Numerous observations and irrefutable facts, which we shall deal with later, have demonstrated that human beings consist of three components: 1) the soul or spirit, the intelligent principle in which the moral sense resides; 2) the body, the material and dense envelope, which the spirit temporarily uses as a garment for fulfilling certain providential designs; 3) the perispirit, the fluidic, semi-material envelope, which serves as the link between the soul and the body.

Death is the destruction, or better, the desaggregation of the dense envelope that the soul abandons. The other envelope detaches itself and accompanies the soul, which therefore always has an envelope. Although fluidic, ethereal, vaporous and invisible to us in its normal state, this latter envelope is also material despite the fact that until now we have been unable to capture it and submit it to analysis.

¹¹ Those who refer to what we have stated in *The Spirits' Book* concerning dreams and the state of the spirit during sleep (nos. 400-418) will understand that the dreams that almost all of them have had, in which they see themselves traveling through space as though they were flying, are a memory of the sensation experienced by their spirit during their emancipation from the body, when they take with them only the fluidic body, the same one they will retain after death. Such dreams can thus give us an idea about the state of the spirit when it has freed itself from the shackles that bound it to the earth. – Auth.

This second envelope of the soul, or *perispirit*, therefore exists during corporeal life itself. It is the intermediary for all the sensations perceived by the spirit, and through which the spirit transmits its will to the outside world and acts upon the body's physical organs. To make a material analogy, the perispirit is the electrical wiring that serves for the reception and transmission of thought. Finally, this mysterious and imperceptible agent known also as the neural fluid – which performs such an important role in the organic workings of the body – is still not sufficiently taken into consideration regarding physiological and pathological phenomena. By taking only the ponderable material element into consideration, medical science deprives itself of a permanent cause of action in its study of the facts. However, this is not the proper place to examine the issue and we need only remember that knowing about the *perispirit* is the key to a host of problems that have until now been unexplainable.

The perispirit is not one of those hypotheses in which science seeks recourse in order to explain a given fact. Its existence was not only revealed by the Spirits, but has also been confirmed by observation, as we will have the occasion to demonstrate further on. For now, however, and in order not to anticipate issues that we will have to deal with later, we will limit ourselves to stating that whether during its union with the body or after its separation from it, the soul is never separated from its perispirit.

55. We have already stated elsewhere that the spirit is a flame, a spark.¹² This applies to the spirit per se as the intellectual and moral principle, but we do not know how to assign a specific shape to it. However, no matter what its degree of evolution, it is always clothed with an envelope or perispirit,

¹² See no. 88 in *The Spirits' Book* – Tr.

whose nature becomes more and more etherealized as it purifies and raises itself in the spirit hierarchy.¹³ Thus, the idea of form is for us so inseparable from the idea of spirit that we cannot conceive of one without the other. The perispirit therefore comprises an integral component of the spirit, just as the body comprises an integral part of the human being. However, the perispirit is not the spirit, just as the body by itself is not the human being, because the perispirit does not think; rather, it is for the spirit what the body is for the individual: the agent or instrument of activity.

56. The form of the perispirit is the human form, and when it appears to us it is usually in the same form by which we knew the spirit during its physical life. That is why we might believe that the perispirit, even when disconnected from all the components of the body, must have somehow modeled itself after the body and retained its form afterwards. Such does not appear to be the case, however. Except for some differences in detail and the organic modifications that are required for the environment in which the being must live, the human form is the same for all inhabitants on all globes – at least according to the Spirits – and it is also the form of all discarnate spirits, who only possess the perispirit. It is also the same form by which the angels or pure spirits have been represented down through the ages. Therefore, we must conclude that the human form is the typical form for all human beings no matter what degree of the hierarchy they belong to. However, the perispirit's subtle matter is not as persistent or inflexible as the body's compact matter. We might say that it is flexible and expandable, and that is why the form it assumes – though an exact copy of the body – is not absolute. It is molded according to the will of the spirit, who can

¹³ See nos. 100 ff. in *The Spirits' Book* – Tr.

give it any appearance it wants to, whereas the physical envelope confronts it with invincible resistance.

Disentangled from the obstacle that had repressed it, the perispirit expands, contracts or transforms itself; in other words, it lends itself to all sorts of metamorphoses, according to the will that acts upon it. It is thanks to this property of its fluidic envelope that the spirit can make itself recognizable when necessary by taking on the exact appearance that it had during its physical life, and even display the very same physical defects that could serve as signs for recognizing it.

Hence, spirits are beings like us, comprising a population around us that is invisible in its normal state – we say *normal* state because, as we shall see, this invisibility is not absolute.

57. Let us return to the perispirit for now since it is essential for the explanation we are about to give. We have stated that although the perispirit is fluidic, it is nevertheless comprised of a type of matter that makes tangible apparitions possible, a matter to which we shall also return later. Under the influence of certain mediums, we have seen hands appear that bear all the properties of living hands – warmth, tangibility, the resistance typical of a solid object, and the ability to hold onto onlookers – only to suddenly vanish like a shadow. The intelligent action of such hands, which obviously obey a will in performing certain movements (even playing tunes on a musical instrument), proves that they are a visible component of an intelligent invisible being. Their tangibility, their warmth and the sensorial impression they produce, even so far as to leave visible marks on the skin (as we have witnessed), to deal painful slaps or to delicately caress, prove that they are comprised of some kind of matter. Moreover, their ability to instantaneously disappear shows that this matter is extremely subtle and behaves like certain substances that can alternately pass from the solid to the fluidic state, and vice-versa.

58. The inmost nature of the spirit per se, that is, of the thinking being, is entirely unknown to us. It only reveals itself through its actions and these actions can only impress our senses by means of an intermediate type of matter. Consequently, the spirit needs matter in order to act upon matter. Its direct instrument for doing so is the perispirit, just as an individual's is the body, and as we have just seen, the perispirit itself is indeed comprised of matter. As its intermediary agent, it has the universal fluid, which is a kind of vehicle upon which it acts, as we ourselves act upon the air in order to produce certain effects through dilation, compression, propulsion or vibration.

Regarded in this way, the fact that the spirit can act upon matter is easy to accept. One may thereby understand that all effects resulting from such action belong to the order of natural events and have nothing miraculous about them. They only appear supernatural because the cause behind them is unknown; however, once the cause is known, they cease to be miraculous, for their cause can be found entirely in the semi-material properties of the perispirit. This is all to be treated as a new order of things, which a new law has come to explain, and at which, before long, no one will be amazed, just as no one nowadays is astonished by long-distance communication, which takes only a few minutes by using electricity.

59. One may perhaps ask how a spirit, with the aid of such subtle matter, is able to act upon heavy and compact objects, to lift tables, etc. It would certainly not take a scientist to raise such an objection, because, without even considering the unknown properties that this new agent must possess, haven't we seen similar examples with our own eyes? Hasn't industry discovered the most powerful motive forces in the most rarified gases and the most imponderable fluids? When we see air topple buildings, steam pull enormous objects, gasified blasting-powder blow

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stones into the air, and electricity split trees and perforate walls, is there anything so strange in accepting the fact that the spirit, by employing its perispirit, can lift a table, especially when it is understood that this perispirit can make itself visible, tangible and behave like a solid object?

CHAPTER II



Physical Manifestations and Turning Tables

60. Physical manifestations are those that result in effects that are perceptible to the senses, such as noises and the movement and displacement of solid objects. Some are spontaneous, i.e., independent of any human will, while others can be artificially induced. To start with, we will only consider the latter.

The simplest effect, one of the first to be observed, is the circular movement imparted to a table. This effect may be produced by using any other object as well, but since a table is the one that is used most often because it is the most convenient, the name *table turning* has been the prevalent designation for this type of phenomenon.

When we stated that this effect was one of the first to be observed, we were referring to modern times¹⁴, because all kinds of such manifestations have certainly been known about since antiquity – it could not have been otherwise. Since they are effects of nature, they would have had to have been produced

¹⁴ This was written in the late 1800s – Tr.

in all ages. Tertullian¹⁵ made clear reference to turning and talking tables.

For some time, this phenomenon was the curious entertainment at various salons, but later went out of fashion and was replaced by other distractions because it really did only amount to a distraction. There were two reasons for abandoning the turning tables: for the frivolous, it was fashion, which rarely allows for the enjoyment of the same entertainment for two winters; however, this particular variety actually provided for three or four! For earnest individuals and observers, the reason was more serious, however – they abandoned the turning tables in order to occupy themselves with the much more important consequences that resulted from them. They left behind the first stages of using the alphabet in order to enter the science; hence the whole secret for this apparent abandonment, about which the scoffers have made such noise.

Whatever the case may be, the turning tables will always represent the starting point for the Spiritist Doctrine, and that is why we must give them a much more in-depth treatment. By presenting spirit phenomena in their simplest expression, studying what causes them will become easier, and once a theory is established, it will give us the key to more complex effects.

61. In order to produce this particular phenomenon, the participation of one or more individuals gifted with a special aptitude is required. These individuals are called *mediums*. The number of other participants does not matter, except that amongst them there may be a few who are mediums but who are still unaware of the fact. As for the participants who have no mediumistic abilities, their presence will have no effect, or may even be more

¹⁵ Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, A.D. c160–c230. Carthaginian theologian (Random House Webster's College Dictionary, 1991) – Tr.

harmful than useful because of the mental disposition that such persons often display.

In this respect, mediums display lesser or greater degrees of power in their ability to produce the phenomenon, and, consequently, produce effects that are quite pronounced or less so. One very powerful medium alone can almost always produce more than twenty less powerful ones together, and it is enough for such a medium to have barely placed his or her hands upon the table for it to instantly begin to move, levitate, turn, jump about or spin violently.

62. There are no outward signs of mediumship and only experience can make it apparent. During a meeting where such an experience is desired, all that is required is for everyone to sit around a table and place their hands flat upon it without pressure or muscular movement. Since the causes of the phenomenon were unknown in the beginning, numerous precautions were taken that were later seen to be completely useless; for example, the alternating seating of males and females or the joining of the participants' little fingers in order to form an unbroken chain. This latter precaution seemed necessary because it was believed that there was some sort of electric current involved, but experience later showed it was useless. The only truly obligatory condition is one of concentration, absolute silence and, especially, patience when the effect is slow in coming. The effect can appear in just a few minutes or it may take a half hour or even a whole hour; it depends on the mediumistic power of the participants.

63. Let us add that the shape of the table and the material from which it is made, the presence of metals, silk in the participants' clothing, days, times, darkness or light etc., make no difference, nor do rain or good weather. Only the weight of the table itself might be of some importance, but only in cases in which

the mediumistic power is not sufficient to move it. However, in other cases, one person alone – even a child – is enough to lift a two hundred pound table, while under less favorable conditions, twelve individuals will not be able to budge even a small table.

When the experiment is ready and when the phenomenon begins to appear, it is very common to hear a small crackling noise within the table and to feel it shudder just before it begins to move; the table seems to struggle to break free from the floor. Then, the rotating movement begins and may accelerate to such a degree that the participants find themselves hard pressed to follow it. Once the movement has begun, the participants can even move away from the table, which will continue to move in various directions.

At other times, the table tilts from one leg to another and then softly returns to its natural position. Still at others, it rocks back and forth and from side to side as if imitating the movement of a ship. Finally, at other times – but requiring a very powerful mediumship – the table rises completely up off the floor and remains suspended in the air without any support, sometimes even rising all the way to the ceiling so that one may pass beneath it. Then, it descends lightly, fluttering in the air like a sheet of paper, or it might violently crash to the floor and break. This is obvious proof that there has been no optical illusion.

64. Another phenomenon that frequently occurs, depending on the nature of the medium, is the production of raps within the heart of the wood, inside it, without there first having been any movement of the table itself. These raps, which are sometimes quite weak and other times very loud, may equally extend to other pieces of furniture in the room, to doors, walls and the ceiling (we shall return to this matter shortly). When these raps occur within the table, they cause a vibration that can be felt with the fingers, and they become especially distinct when one places one's ear against the table.

CHAPTER III



Intelligent Manifestations

65. Regarding the incidents that we have just examined, there is nothing in them that necessarily reveals the involvement of some hidden power. Such effects might be explained perfectly well as being the action of some kind of electric or magnetic current, or some kind of fluid. This was, in fact, the first solution proposed for the phenomena, and it could certainly have passed as being very logical. This solution would have undoubtedly prevailed if there had not been other facts proving its insufficiency. These facts consisted in the evidence of intelligence displayed by the phenomena. In addition, since every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause, it became obvious that, even accepting the possibility of electricity or some other fluid being involved, another cause was nevertheless present also. What could it be? What was this intelligence? This is what further observations revealed.

66. In order for a particular manifestation to show intelligence, it does not have to be convincing, clever or wise. All that is required is for it to act freely and voluntarily, revealing an intention or corresponding to a thought. When we see a weathervane moving under the force of the wind, we know that it is only obeying

a mechanical impulse, but if we were to recognize signs of intent in its movements, if it turned right or left and quickly or slowly in obedience to our orders, we would have to admit that it was not the weathervane itself that possessed intelligence, but rather that it was obeying our own intelligence. That is exactly what happened with the tables.

67. We have seen a table move, rise into the air and produce raps under the influence of one or several mediums, and the first intelligent effect observed was that it obeyed the orders given to it. Without moving about, the table alternately stood on the legs that were indicated to it. Next, when it was square on the floor, it produced a certain number of raps in response to particular questions. At other times and without anyone touching it, the table moved around the room by itself, going right or left, backward and forward, and executing the various maneuvers that the participants required of it. It was obvious that we could rule out all suspicion of fraud; we accepted the unquestionable fidelity of the participants because of their honorability and complete disinterestedness. We will later address the issue of fraud, against which it is prudent to guard oneself.

68. By means of raps – mainly those produced within the wood itself, which we have already addressed – even more intelligent effects were observed, such as the imitation of the beating of drums, the discharge of muskets by a file or platoon, the firing of cannons, the rasping of a saw, the strike of a hammer, the rhythms of certain arias, etc. An entire, vast field was therefore opening up to investigation. It was further reasoned that if there was in fact an invisible intelligence present, it might be able to respond to questions, and, in fact, it really did respond with a *yes* or a *no*, according to the number of agreed-upon raps produced. Since these two responses were quite limiting, however, a system

was established using a certain number of raps to correspond to each letter of the alphabet in order to form words and sentences.

69. Since these occurrences were being repeated at will by thousands of persons in every country, they could leave no doubt as to their intelligent nature. It was then that a new theory was devised for interpreting them, attributing the manifesting intelligence to the medium, the observer or even the participants. However, the difficulty was in explaining how this intelligence could be reflected within the table itself and be communicated by means of raps. Since the raps were not produced by the medium, then they must be produced somehow by thought, but for thought to somehow be able to produce such raps would be a more remarkable phenomenon than all the incidents that had been observed. It did not take long for experience to show that this theory was unacceptable. In fact, the responses were very often shown to be completely opposite to what the participants were thinking and beyond the scope of the medium's intellect; they were even given in languages unknown by the medium or they pertained to facts unknown by any of the participants. Such examples are so numerous that it is almost impossible for anyone to be involved with spirit communications without having witnessed them many times. We shall cite only one example, which was related to us by an eye witness.

70. On an Imperial French Navy ship stationed on the seas around China, the entire crew, from the seamen to the captain, entertained themselves with talking tables. They decided to evoke the spirit of a lieutenant of the same vessel, who had died two years previously. He responded, and after several communications that surprised everybody, he used raps to say the following: "I beg of you to pay the captain the sum of ... (he indicated the amount), which I owe him, and which I regret not having been able to pay back before I died." Nobody had even known about it. The

captain himself had forgotten all about the debt, which was quite small, by the way. However, upon checking his financial records, he found the entry of the lieutenant's debt in the exact amount indicated. Now we must ask: whose thought could have possibly been reflected in this instance?

71. This art of communicating by the alphabetical system of raps was eventually perfected, but it was always very cumbersome. Nevertheless, some lengthy communications as well as a few interesting revelations about the world of spirits were obtained. This method gave rise to others, and hence the arrival of written communications.

The first communications of this type were obtained using a miniature table to which a pencil was fitted and then placed upon a sheet of paper. Under the medium's influence, this tiny table began to trace out a few letters, and then began to write words and sentences. The process was gradually simplified by using even smaller tables that were specially made to fit the hand, followed by tiny baskets, cardboard boxes and, finally, simple planchettes. The writing was fluent, rapid and easy – as if done by hand – but it was realized later that all these objects only served as extensions of the hand itself: simple pencil-holders, which could be dispensed with. In fact, the medium's own hand alone, impelled involuntarily, could write under the influence of a spirit without the concurrence of either the medium's thought or will. From then on, communications from beyond the grave presented no more difficulty than every day correspondence among the living.

We shall return to these different means later in order to explain them in more detail, but we have given a quick outline here in order to show the string of the events that led to the realization that the phenomena entailed the involvement of invisible intelligences, that is, spirits.

CHAPTER IV



Explanation of the Physical Manifestations

- Movements and Suspensions; Noises • Increase
and Decrease in the Weight of Objects

Movements and Suspensions; Noises

72. Having used both reasoning and phenomena to demonstrate the existence of spirits, along with the possibility of their being able to act upon matter, we must now determine how their actions are produced and how they operate in order to move tables and other inert objects.

One idea that naturally occurred is the one that we held to for a while. However, the Spirits contested it and provided us with a completely different explanation – one we did not anticipate at all; moreover, it is obvious that their explanation did not originate with us (our original idea could have quite possibly been held by others as well). As for the Spirits' explanation, we do not believe that it could have ever occurred to anyone else. It is certainly easy to see how much more superior it is than our own, although

it is also simpler because it offers a solution to numerous other incidents that had no satisfactory explanation.

73. Knowledge of the nature of spirits, their human form, the semi-material properties of their perispirit, the mechanical action they can exert upon matter, and the occurrence of apparitions of fluidic and even tangible hands that could lift objects and carry them, naturally led to our belief that a spirit simply used its hands in order to turn a table and that it lifted it by using its arms. But if that were so, then what was the need for mediums? Couldn't the spirit act by itself? Since mediums often rested their hands upon the table in a position contrary to its movement, or did not even place their hands upon it at all, they obviously could not aid the spirit with any muscular movement. Let us first see what the Spirits whom we asked had to say about the matter.

74. The following responses were given by the Spirit St. Louis and were later confirmed by others:

1) *Is the universal fluid an emanation of the Divinity?*

"No."

2) *Is it a creation of the Divinity?*

"Everything has been created except God."

3) *Is the universal fluid the universal element itself?*

"Yes, it is the elementary principle of all things."

4) *Does it have any relation to the electric fluid, whose effects we are familiar with?*

"It is its element."

5) *How is the universal fluid displayed to us in its simplest form?*

"To find it in its absolute simplest form, one would have to ascend toward the pure spirits. In your world, however, it is always modified to varying degrees in order to form the dense matter all around you. Nevertheless, you could say that it is closest to its simplest form in the fluid known as the *magnetic animalized fluid*."

6) *It has been stated that the universal fluid is the source of all life. Is it at the same time the source of all intelligence?*

“No. This particular fluid merely animates matter.”

7) *Since it is this fluid that forms the perispirit, it seems that it undergoes a kind of condensation, which, to a certain point, approaches matter per se.*

“As you say, ‘to a certain point’, because it does not possess all the properties of matter per se, and its condensation is greater or lesser, according to the nature of the various worlds.”

8) *How does a spirit move a solid object?*

“It combines a portion of the universal fluid with the fluid emitted by the medium in order to move it.”

9) *Do spirits lift tables using their arms, which have become solidified somehow?*

“The answer to that question will not yet tell you what you want to know. When a table moves underneath your hands, it is because the spirit who has been evoked has taken enough of the universal fluid to infuse the table with artificial life. Having prepared the table in this way, the spirit attracts it and moves it under the influence of its own fluid, which it emits by exerting its own will. When the object that it wants to move is too heavy for it, it asks for the help of other spirits who possess similar characteristics. Because of its ethereal nature, the spirit in and of itself cannot act upon dense matter without some kind of intermediary; that is, without the link that connects it to matter. This link is what you call the perispirit and it provides the key to all physical spirit phenomena. I believe I have explained the matter clearly enough to have made myself understood.”

We would call attention to the sentence: “The answer to that question will not YET tell you what you want to know.” This Spirit understood perfectly well that all the preceding questions had the sole purpose of leading up to Question 9. He was referring

to our thought, wherein we had in fact anticipated a different response; i.e., one that would confirm our own idea about the way spirits move tables.

10) *Are the spirits whom it calls upon to help of a less evolved nature? Are they under its orders?*

“They are almost always its equals and come spontaneously.”

11) *Are all spirits able to produce phenomena of this kind?*

“The spirits who produce them are always of a less evolved nature that is not yet entirely free of material influences.”

12) *We can understand that highly evolved spirits do not concern themselves with matters that are well below them, but we would like to know if they would have the ability to do so if they wanted to since they are more dematerialized.*

“They possess mental power, as the others possess physical power. When they have need of the latter, they employ those who have it. Haven’t we already stated that they use lower order spirits in the same way that you employ porters?”

We have already stated that the density of the perispirit, if one may say so, varies according to the nature of the various worlds.¹⁶ It also seems to vary on the same world according to different individuals. In *morally advanced* spirits, it is subtler and comes close to the perispirit of high order entities. On the other hand, in low order spirits it is closer to matter, and this is what causes the persistence of the illusions of earthly life in such spirits, who think and act as if they were still physically alive, possessing the same desires and, we could almost say, the same sensuality. This density of the perispirit, which lends it a greater *affinity* to matter, is what enables low order spirits to be more skillful at physical manifestations. It is similar to why a refined person with a fragile and delicate body, and who is used to intellectual endeavors, cannot lift heavy loads like a porter can. The matter of his or her

¹⁶ See *The Spirits’ Book*, nos. 94 and 187 – Tr.

body is somewhat less compact, the organs are less resilient and the neural fluid is less intense. The perispirit is for the spirit what the body is for the individual. Its density results from the less purified nature of the spirit; hence, this density replaces muscular strength; i.e., it gives it greater power over the fluids needed for this type of manifestation than a spirit of a more ethereal nature possesses. If a more evolved spirit wants to produce such effects, it does what frail persons among us would do: it employs a *spirit of the trade*.

13) *If we correctly understand what you have said, the vital principle lies in the universal fluid. The spirit draws the semi-material envelope that comprises its perispirit from this fluid, and it is through this fluid that it acts upon inert matter. Is this so?*

“Yes, it means that it animates matter with a sort of artificial life: matter becomes infused with animal life. The table that moves under your hands is alive with animal-like life and obeys the intelligent being itself. The spirit itself does not push the table as if it were some kind of physical load, and when the table rises into the air, the spirit is not lifting it with its arms; instead, the animated table obeys the impulse given to it by the spirit.”

14) *What role does the medium play in this phenomenon?*

“I have already said that the medium’s own fluid is combined with the universal fluid accumulated by the spirit. The uniting of both the animalized and universal fluids is required in order to endow the table with life. However, you must not forget that this life is only momentary. It stops with the cessation of the fluids’ action, and often before the process is fully completed – as soon as the amount of the fluids is no longer sufficient to animate the table.”

15) *Can a spirit act without resorting to a medium?*

“It can act without the medium being aware of it; in other words, many persons help spirits to produce certain phenomena without even suspecting it. These persons are like fountains from

which spirits draw the animal fluid they need. Consequently, the conscious participation of a medium, as you know, is not always necessary, especially with spontaneous phenomena.”

16) *Does the animated table act with intelligence? Does it think?*

“The object itself does not think; it is like a walking stick that you might use to make an intelligent signal to someone: the vitality that animates it enables it to obey the impulse of the intelligence behind it. You should realize that the moving table does not become a *spirit*, and it has neither thought nor will.”

We frequently use a similar expression in every day language: concerning a wheel that is spinning rapidly, we say that it is *animated* by a rapid movement.

17) *What is the preponderant cause in the production of this phenomenon: the spirit itself or the fluid?*

“The spirit is the cause and the fluid is its instrument. Both are required.”

18) *In this case, what role does the medium’s will play?*

“To call upon the spirits and to aid them in giving impulse to the fluid.

– *Is the medium’s will always indispensable?*

“It increases the potency, but it is not always necessary, since a movement may occur in spite of or contrary to the medium’s will – further proof for the existence of an independent cause.”

It is not always even necessary for the hands to come in contact with the object in order for it to move. Almost always, all that they are needed for is to provide the initial impulse, but after the object has been animated it can obey the will without any physical contact. Of course, this depends on the power of the medium or the nature of the spirits involved. Moreover, even the first contact is not always needed. We have proof of this in the spontaneous movements and dislocations that no one even thought about causing.

19) *Why can't everyone produce the same effects, and why don't all mediums possess the same power?*

“It depends on physical composition and the greater or lesser ease in combining the fluids. It further depends on the greater or lesser affinity between the medium and the spirits, who find in the medium the required fluidic potency. As is the case with magnetizers, this potency is either little or great. In this regard, we have found individuals who are completely resistant to the process; others in which the combining of the fluids only occurs because they exert their own will; finally, others in which it occurs so naturally and easily that they are not even aware of it, where they serve as unknowing instruments, as we have just stated.” (See below, the chapter concerning spontaneous manifestations)

There is no doubt that magnetism is the principle behind these phenomena, but not as is generally supposed. We have proof of this in the existence of powerful magnetizers who cannot even move a small table, while there are individuals – even children – who do not know how to magnetize at all and who merely have to place their fingers upon a heavy table in order for it to shake. Thus, if mediumistic power does not depend on magnetic power, it must have some other cause.

20) *Can those called electricals be regarded as mediums?*

“Such individuals draw from within themselves the fluid required for producing the phenomena and they can act without the aid of spirits. They are not mediums per se in the precise meaning of the word. It might happen that a spirit will assist them and take advantage of their natural abilities, however.”

Such individuals are like somnambulists, who can act with or without spirits helping them. (See chap. XIV below, *Mediums*, in the section dealing with somnambulists)

21) *When they act upon solid objects, do spirits penetrate their substance or do they remain outside it?*

“They do both. We have already stated that matter is no obstacle to spirits, who can penetrate anything. A portion of their perispirit identifies itself, so to speak, with the object it penetrates.”

22) *How does a spirit produce raps? Does it use a physical object?*

“No. Just as they do not use their arms to lift a table, you must realize that they do not have hammers at their disposal to produce raps. Instead, their ‘hammer’ is the combined fluid that they put into action using their will to move objects or produce raps. When they move objects, light transmits the movement to your sight; when they produce raps, air transmits the sound to you.”

23) *We can understand this when dealing with a hard object, but how can a spirit make us hear noises or articulated sounds within the air alone?*

“Since it can act upon matter, it can thus act upon air in the same way that it acts upon a table. As for articulating sounds, it can imitate them just like all other noises.”

24) *You have stated that a spirit does not use its hands to move a table, but during certain visual manifestations hands have appeared that played keyboards, actually moving the keys and producing sounds. In this case, isn't the movement of the keys produced by the pressure of their fingers? And isn't the pressure of their fingers direct and real when we feel them touch us and when they even leave marks on the skin?*

“You cannot comprehend the nature of spirits and the way they act by merely using comparisons, which provide only an incomplete idea of the matter. It is always a mistake to compare their manner of acting to yours. Spirits must always act in accordance with their organization. Haven't we stated that the perispirit's fluid penetrates matter and identifies with it, endowing it with artificial life? Well then, when a spirit plays a keyboard with its fingers, it is really doing so; however, it does not use muscular force to press the keys. Instead, like the table, it animates the keyboard, which obeys its will and vibrates the strings. In cases such as this, something else

happens that is hard for you to comprehend. Certain spirits are still so little-evolved and so material in comparison with evolved spirits that they retain the illusions of earthly life and think that they continue to act as they did when they were in the body. They do not perceive the true cause of the effects they produce, as a commoner does not understand the theory behind the sounds he or she pronounces. If you ask such spirits how they can play the piano, they will say that they use their fingers since that is what they believe. They produce the effect instinctively without even knowing how; nonetheless, they actually produce it by their will. Whenever they speak or make themselves heard, it is the same thing.”

Thus, we can understand that spirits can produce all the effects we ourselves can, but by means in keeping with their organization. They possess certain inner forces that replace our muscles, just as persons who cannot speak sign with their hands.

25) *Among the phenomena cited as proofs for the action of a concealed power, there are those who are obviously contrary to all the known laws of nature. Hence, isn't it correct to question them?*

“It just so happens that humans are far from knowing about all the laws of nature; if they knew about them, it would imply that they were highly evolved spirits. However, every day there are incidents to disprove those who think they know everything, who intend to impose limits on nature, and yet they are no less proud of themselves at the fact. By constantly unveiling new mysteries, God warns people that they must distrust their own knowledge, because a day will come in which *the knowledge of the most learned person will be confounded*. Every day, don't you see examples of objects that are impelled by a motion that is capable of overcoming the power of gravity? Doesn't a ball thrown into the air momentarily overcome this force? Poor humans, who regard yourselves as being so learned, and whose foolish vanity is confused at every turn, you must realize that you are still so very small!”

75. The above explanations are clear, categorical and unambiguous. From them we may emphasize the crucial point that the universal fluid, which harbors the principle of life, is the chief agent in manifestations, and that this agent receives its impulse from the spirit, whether incarnate or discarnate. This condensed fluid comprises the perispirit or semi-material envelope of the spirit. When incarnate, the perispirit is connected to the matter of the body; in the errant state, it is free. While the spirit is incarnate, the substance of its perispirit is more or less bound, more or less adherent to it, if we may put it so. In certain individuals there is a kind of emanation of this fluid as a result of particular conditions in their physical composition, which is, properly speaking, what produces physical effects mediums. The greater or lesser abundance of the emanation of this animalized fluid and the ease with which it is combined determines the medium's power. This emanation is not permanent, however, which explains the intermittency of the ability.

76. Let us make a comparison. When we want to strike something that is some distance away, we first determine to do so with our thought, but thought alone cannot actualize our intent. We need an intermediary, which our thought will direct: a stick, a projectile, a blast of air, etc. Note further that our thought cannot act directly upon the stick, for if we do not touch it, it will not act by itself. Our thought, which is the spirit itself incarnated in our body, is united to the body by the perispirit and cannot act upon the body without it, in the same way that it cannot act upon the stick without the help of the body. Therefore, the spirit acts upon the perispirit, which is the substance with which it has the most affinity. Then, the perispirit acts upon the muscles, which in turn enable the hand to pick up the stick and the stick to strike the target. When the spirit is not incarnate, it requires an instrument – the fluid that aids it in making the object carry out the impulse of its will.

77. Therefore, when an object is moved, lifted or thrown through the air, the spirit does not take hold of it, lift it or throw it as we do with our hands. It *saturates* it, so to speak, with its fluid, combined with the medium's fluid. Momentarily animated thereby, the object acts like a living being, with the difference that it does not have a will of its own but instead obeys the impulse of the spirit's will.

Thus, the vital fluid, impelled by the spirit, endows inert objects with artificial and momentary life. Since the perispirit is nothing other than this vital fluid itself, it follows that the incarnate spirit, by means of its perispirit, is what gives life to its own body, and it stays united to it as long as its organization enables it to. When the spirit withdraws, the body dies. So, if instead of a table we took a wooden statue and acted upon it like we did upon the table, we would have a statue that could move about and produce raps in response to our questions; in other words, we would have a statue that was momentarily animated with artificial life – besides *talking tables*, we would also have *talking statues*. How much light this explanation casts over an infinite number of phenomena heretofore inexplicable! How many allegories and mysterious effects it resolves!

78. In spite of all the evidence, disbelievers object that the phenomenon of the levitation of tables without a means of support is impossible because it is contrary to the law of gravity. First, we will respond that denial in and of itself is not proof; second, if the phenomenon is real, it is somehow contrary to all *known* laws, which would prove one thing: the phenomenon originates from an *unknown* law, and those who deny the fact cannot claim to know about all the laws of nature. We have just explained this unknown law; nevertheless, disbelievers will not regard our explanation as sufficient since it was provided by spirits who have shed their earthly garments instead of “spirits” who still wear theirs and occupy a seat

at the Academy. Hence, if the spirit of Arago had revealed this law while he was still alive, they would all have accepted it with eyes shut tight, but if given by the exact same spirit after death, it would be pure nonsense. Why so? Because they believe that since Arago is dead, then everything he believed is dead forever. We have no intention of dissuading them; nevertheless, since this objection might trouble certain persons, we will try to respond to them from their very own point of view; that is, we will momentarily set aside the artificial life explanation.

79. When one creates a vacuum in a bell-glass by using a vacuum pump, the bell-glass sticks to the base and it is impossible to unstick the glass because of the air pressure holding it down. If air is put back into it, the bell-glass is easy to unstick because the air pressure has been restored to equilibrium, and if it is left to itself it will remain on the plate due to the law of gravity. However, if the air pressure inside the bell-glass becomes greater than the air on the outside, the glass will rise in spite of gravity. If a rapid and forceful current of air is employed, the glass will remain suspended in the air without any *visible* means of support, like what happens with those dolls that spin upon the sprays of a water fountain. So, why wouldn't the universal fluid – the *basic element of all matter* – accumulated around a table not have the ability to increase or decrease the table's specific relative weight, just like the air does with the bell-glass, or hydrogen does with balloons, without derogating from the law of gravity? Do you know about all the properties and the full power of this fluid? No. Well then, do not deny a fact simply because you cannot explain it.

80. Let us return to the explanation of how a table moves. If a spirit can lift a table by the means indicated, then it can lift anything else as well: an armchair, for example. And if it can lift an armchair, it can also lift it with a person sitting in it if it uses enough

force. Thus, we have provided an explanation for the phenomenon that has been produced a hundred times by Mr. Home¹⁷ himself and by others too. He repeated it on a recent trip to London, and in order to prove to his audience that they were not victims of an optical illusion, he made a mark on the ceiling with a pencil and also allowed them to pass beneath the chair. Everyone knows that Mr. Home is a powerful physical effects medium. In this instance, he was both the efficient cause and the levitated object itself.

Increase and Decrease in the Weight of Objects

81. We alluded earlier to the possible increasing of an object's weight, which is a phenomenon that has in fact been produced at times, and about which there is nothing any more abnormal than the resistance of the bell-glass caused by atmospheric pressure. Under the influence of certain mediums, we have seen very light objects offer the same sort of resistance, and then suddenly yield to very little effort. With the bell-glass experiment, the object in reality weighs no more or less than it normally does; it just seems heavier because of the outside cause acting upon it. The same thing probably happens with a table. It continues to maintain its intrinsic weight since its mass has not been increased, but an outside force opposes its movement. The cause may be in the surrounding fluids that penetrate it, just as the bell-glass cause is in the atmospheric pressure. Perform the bell-glass experiment in front of an unlearned peasant, and he will not understand that the acting agent is actually the air that he cannot see; it would be very easy to persuade him that it was the Devil's work.

¹⁷ Daniel Dunglas Home was a famous British medium who produced levitation phenomena – Tr.

One could perhaps think that since the fluid is imponderable, then its accumulation could not increase an object's weight. Agreed. However, notice that if we have employed the word *accumulation*, it is to make a comparison and not to identify the fluid with the air. Yes, it may be imponderable; nevertheless, there is nothing to prove that it is. Its essential nature is unknown to us and we are far from knowing about all of its properties. Before knowing about the weight of air, no one would have suspected such an effect to be possible. Electricity is also classified among the imponderable fluids; nevertheless, an object can be held down by an electric current and will strongly resist whoever attempts to lift it. It thus appears to have become heavier, but simply because of the fact that there is no support to be seen, it would be illogical to conclude that there is none. Hence, a spirit may possess means of leverage unknown to us. Nature proves to us every day that it cannot be limited to the testimony of our senses.

One remarkable phenomenon, of which we have many similar examples, could only be explained by a similar cause. It involves a young and delicate lady, who by using only two fingers and as easily as she would a feather, can lift a strong and healthy man along with the chair upon which he is sitting. The intermittent expression of the faculty in this type of phenomenon proves that its cause is foreign to the person who possesses it.

CHAPTER V



Spontaneous Physical Manifestations

- Noises, Racket and Disturbances • The Hurling of Objects • The Phenomenon of Apportation
- A Spirit's Dissertation on Apportation

Noises, Racket and Disturbances

82. The phenomena we have just dealt with are usually artificially produced; however, they sometimes occur spontaneously, without the participants' will, and, in fact, they almost always become quite untimely. Furthermore, what excludes them from the notion that they are the effects of an imagination that has become over-excited by Spiritist ideas is that they occur among persons who have never even heard of Spiritism and at times when they are least expected. These phenomena, which may be regarded as involving natural Spiritist practice, are very important because they exclude any suspicion of contrivance. This is why we have recommended to individuals who concern themselves with spirit phenomena that they gather all the data of this type which they

may become aware of, but especially that they carefully determine their reality through a detailed study of the circumstances so that they may assure themselves that they are not the objects of a simple illusion or hoax.

83. Of all the spirit manifestations, the simplest and most frequent are noises and raps. However, it is especially in these cases that we must be on guard against illusion since there are many natural causes that can produce them: the wind whistling or banging an object, our own moving of an object without our awareness of it, an acoustic effect, a hidden animal, an insect, etc. – even off-colored pranks. Besides, spirit noises have peculiar characteristics, with variable intensity and tone, and which makes them easy to recognize and not to be confused with creaking wood, crackling fire or the dull tick-tock of a clock. The raps are dry, sometimes muffled, weak and light; sometimes, loud and distinct, even noisy, and they change places and repeat themselves without any mechanical regularity. The most effective means of controlling them, which leaves no doubt as to their origin, is to subject them to our will. If the noises make themselves heard wherever we so indicate, if they respond to our thought by repeating themselves the number of times we request, and if they increase or decrease their intensity, we cannot deny that there is an intelligent cause present. Nevertheless, the lack of such a response does not necessarily prove the contrary.

84. However, if after a detailed examination we accept the fact that the noises or any other effect are real manifestations, would it then be reasonable for us to be afraid of them? Assuredly not, since these cases pose no danger. Only persons who believe that the Devil is involved can be affected adversely by them, like children who fear werewolves and bogeymen. Under certain circumstances, we must agree, these manifestations take on very disagreeable proportions and persistence; therefore, those who

experience them naturally desire to get rid of them. Consequently, an explanation regarding the matter is required.

85. We have already stated that physical manifestations are meant to call our attention to something and to convince us that there is a supra-human power present. We have also stated that highly evolved spirits do not concern themselves directly with these manifestations and that they use less evolved spirits to produce them; just as we use servants for heavier tasks, highly evolved spirits do so for the purpose we have just indicated. After such purpose has been achieved and since it is no longer needed, the manifestation ceases. One or two examples will make the matter more intelligible.

86. Several years ago, when I first began my study of Spiritism, I was involved with the subject one evening when I heard raps that sounded all around me for four consecutive hours. It was the first time that this had happened. I verified that there was no incidental cause involved, but at the moment I was not able to learn any more about it. At the time, I frequently met with an excellent writing medium, so the next day I questioned the spirit who normally communicated through him as to what had caused the raps. The spirit answered me: "*It was your familiar spirit wanting to speak with you.*" "And what did he want to say to me?" "*You can ask him yourself because he is right here.*" So I asked him and he identified himself using an allegorical name (other spirits told me afterwards that he belonged to a very high order and that he had performed a very important role on the earth). He pointed out errors in my work, indicating *the exact lines* where I could find them. He gave me useful and wise advice and added that he would always be with me and would answer me whenever I wanted to question him. Since then, this spirit has, in fact, never left me. He has given me numerous highly valuable proofs, and his *benevolent* and *effective* intervention has helped me both with the every day

problems of physical life and with metaphysical ones. However, ever since that first conversation, the raps have ceased. What did he in fact want? He wanted to establish regular communication with me, but to do so he had to alert me to his presence. Having done so, he explained his motives and we established a regular relationship – the raps were no longer necessary. It is no longer necessary to beat a drum to awaken soldiers when they have already arisen.

A very similar case involved one of our friends. For quite some time, he had heard various noises around his room, and which became very annoying. Having an opportunity to interview his father's spirit via a writing medium, he learned what it was that those spirits wanted. He fulfilled their request and from then on no longer heard the noises. We would point out that persons who have regular and easy means of communicating with spirits are much less subject to manifestations of this kind, which is understandable.

87. Spontaneous manifestations are not always limited to noises and raps. They sometimes degenerate into veritable racket and disturbances. Furniture and other objects are flipped over; various projectiles are hurled about outside the room; doors and windows are opened and closed by invisible hands and windowpanes are broken – none of this can be attributed to illusion.

This disorder is quite often very real, though at times it is only apparent. A racket may be heard in an adjoining room – the crash of dinnerware as it apparently hits the floor, or logs of wood rolling around. Then, when one runs to investigate, everything is found to be peaceful and in order; however, leave the room and the tumult starts all over again.

88. Such manifestations are neither rare nor new, and there are few local chronicles that do not contain some account of this type. There is no doubt that fear has often exaggerated the facts,

which have assumed gigantically ridiculous proportions when passed from one person to the next. With the help of superstition, the houses in which such phenomena occur have been considered as being haunted by the Devil; hence all the fantastic and horrifying fables of ghosts. Deception, on the other hand, has not lost the opportunity to exploit such credulity to its own profit. Even when they are reduced to reality, one may certainly understand the impression that incidents of this kind can have on weak characters who have been predisposed to superstitious notions by education. The safest way to avoid the troubles that can arise from these incidents (because they cannot be prevented) is to make the truth known. The simplest incidents become frightening when the causes behind them are unknown. When there is finally widespread familiarity with spirits, and when those with whom they communicate no longer believe they are dealing with a legion of demons, fear will disappear completely.

In *Revue Spirite*, many authentic occurrences of this kind have been recorded, among which are the story of the rapping spirit of Bergzabern, whose nasty influence lasted eight years (May, June and July issues of 1858); that of the spirit of Dibbelsdorf (Aug. 1858); that of the baker of Grandes-Ventes, close to Dieppe (Mar. 1860); the one on Noyers Street in Paris (Aug., 1860); the spirit of Castelnaudary, entitled *l'Histoire d'un Damné* (Feb. 1860); the one of the manufacturer of St. Petersburg (Apr. 1860), and many others.

89. Manifestations of this nature often assume the character of bona fide persecution. We know of six sisters who lived together and who for several years awoke in the morning to find their clothing scattered everywhere, hidden in the ceiling or ripped and cut to pieces in spite of their precautions in keeping them locked up. Often, persons have been lying down, *but perfectly awake*, and have seen the curtains thrown open, or their covers and pillows

violently snatched away, or they have been lifted into the air and sometimes even thrown out of bed. These events are more frequent than one might think, but most victims keep quiet out of fear of being ridiculed. We know that due to these facts some of these persons have been subjected to medical treatment for deranged individuals as though they were experiencing hallucinations, and as a result they ended up actually losing their minds. Medicine cannot comprehend such incidents, since it will only accept material causes, a fact which has led to disastrous errors. History will someday comment on certain treatments of the 19th century in the same way it comments nowadays on certain procedures of medieval times.

We perfectly accept the fact that some of these instances are the work of malice or malevolence, but since it has been sufficiently verified that they are not produced by any human, we must conclude that they are, according to some, the work of the Devil, or according to others, the work of spirits. But what spirits?

90. Highly evolved spirits, like serious and responsible human individuals, do not enjoy themselves by causing an uproar. We have often interviewed the spirits involved in this type of phenomenon about their reason for troubling someone's rest and have found that most of them have only wanted to entertain themselves. They are frivolous spirits rather than evil, who laugh about the alarm they cause and the futile research their victims undertake in trying to find out the cause of the commotion. They will often attach themselves to individuals and entertain themselves by troubling them everywhere they go. At other times, they attach themselves to a particular place out of pure caprice, but they sometimes do so out of vengeance, as we will see. In certain cases, however, their intentions are more praiseworthy; they want to call attention to themselves and to establish communications, whether to give useful advice to the person whom they are

addressing or to make a request for themselves. We have often seen them ask for prayers or the fulfillment of some obligation they were unable to accomplish; others, for their own peace of mind, want to mend a wrong they had committed while alive. It is usually a mistake to fear their presence, which may be untimely but not dangerous.

The desire to be free of them is understandable, but the way used to do so is usually the opposite of what should be done. When dealing with spirits who are merely entertaining themselves, the more seriously they are taken, the more persistent they become – like ornery children, who bother people even more the more impatient they become, and who frighten the timid. On the other hand, if people were simply to laugh at their antics, they would tire of them and leave their victims in peace. We know someone who, instead of being annoyed by them, urged them on, challenging them to do this or that, so that after a few days they went away. But as we have said, there are some who act with less frivolous reasons. Therefore, it is always best to try to find out what they want. If they ask for something, their visits are sure to cease when they have been satisfied. The best way for obtaining information is to evoke them through a capable writing medium. From their responses, one can determine who they are and may act accordingly. If an unhappy spirit is involved, charity requires treating it with the attention it deserves; if it is a deceptive spirit, we may deal with it directly; if it is evil, we must pray to God to enable it to become better. In all cases, however, prayer can only bring good results. On the other hand, solemn exorcism formulas only provoke them to laughter – they are of no consequence to them. If one can communicate with them, one should distrust the burlesque or scary titles they sometimes give themselves in order to entertain themselves at the gullibility of their audience.

We shall return to deal with this subject in more detail, as well as the causes that frequently render prayers useless, in the chapters *Haunted Places* (IX) and *Obsession* (XXIII).

91. Although they are produced by less evolved spirits, these phenomena are quite often caused by spirits of a higher order for the purpose of demonstrating the existence of incorporeal beings and a power superior to that of humans. The repercussions that result from them, the very horror they can stir up, call attention to the matter and end up opening the eyes of the most incredulous, who would otherwise think it simpler to regard the phenomena as effects of the imagination, a very convenient explanation that dispenses with searching for others. But when objects are turned over or thrown at people's heads, it would take a very complacent imagination not to see that the incidents are real. If something occurs, it obviously has a cause, and if a *cool* and *collected observation* shows the effect to be independent of any human will or material cause, and that it furthermore shows *obvious* signs of its own intelligence and free will – *its most characteristic trait* – people will be forced to attribute it to a concealed intelligence. But who are these mysterious beings? That is what Spiritist studies have revealed in a way that is hard to dispute, thanks to the means such studies have provided for communicating with them.

Moreover, Spiritist studies have also taught us how to determine what is real, false or exaggerated about the phenomena we have not witnessed. When a strange effect occurs – a noise, a movement or even an apparition – the first thought that should enter our minds is that its cause is completely natural, because that is the most probable one. We must thus search for its cause with great care and not accept the intervention of spirits unless we do so judiciously. This will enable us to avoid illusion. For example, someone who receives a slap or blow from a cane to the back

without being approached by anyone (as has happened), could not doubt the presence of an invisible being.

We must caution ourselves against reports that can be considered to be more or less exaggerated, and also against our own impressions so that we do not attribute an unseen origin to everything we find unexplainable. There are many simple and natural causes that can produce effects that appear quite strange at first glance, and it would obviously be superstitious to see spirits everywhere, occupied with overturning furniture, breaking windows and causing all sorts of domestic disturbances that may more reasonably be attributed to our own carelessness.

The Hurling of Objects

92. The explanation of how inert objects are moved naturally applies to all the spontaneous effects we have just dealt with. Although they are louder than raps within a table, noises have the same cause. The hurling and displacement of objects are produced by the same force that lifts any object into the air. There is even a circumstance that serves to support this theory. We might ask where the medium may be found in these cases, and the Spirits have explained that there is always someone whose forces are used unwittingly. Spontaneous manifestations rarely occur in isolated areas, but almost always occur in inhabited houses and are due to the presence of certain individuals who unknowingly exert their influence. These people are mediums but are unaware of their abilities; we thus call them *natural mediums*. They are to other mediums what natural somnambulists are to magnetic somnambulists and are as worthy of examination.

93. The voluntary or involuntary intervention of an individual endowed with a special aptitude appears to be necessary

in most cases to produce these phenomena, although sometimes there are circumstances where a spirit seems to be acting alone. However, even in such cases it could still be taking the animalized fluid from someone who is not in the immediate area. This would explain why it is that even though spirits are constantly around us, they do not cause disturbances all the time. A spirit must first want to, and must have a purpose and a motive, without which it does not do anything. Then, it must find an individual nearby who is capable of aiding it where it intends to act – a coincidence that rarely happens. If such an individual unexpectedly appears, the spirit takes advantage of the opportunity. However, despite these favorable circumstances, it may still be prevented by a superior will, who will not allow it to act as it wants, or it may be allowed only to act within certain limits in cases where such manifestations may be considered useful, whether to serve as a means of conviction or as a trial for the person subjected to them.

94. Regarding the above matter, we will allude to a conversation arising from events that occurred in June of 1860 on Noyers Street in Paris. Details of the incident can be found in *Revue Spirite*, August 1860:

1) (To St. Louis) *Would you be so kind as to tell us if the events that are said to be occurring on Noyers Street are real or not? We have no doubt that it is quite possible for them to occur.*

“Yes, the events are real, but popular imagination has exaggerated the facts, whether out of fear or mockery. Nonetheless, I will repeat that they are real. The manifestations are being caused by a spirit who is entertaining itself at the expense of the inhabitants of the place.”

2) *Is there someone in the house who is the cause of the manifestations?*

“Such manifestations are always caused by the presence of a disliked individual to whom the spirit attaches itself. The

troublesome spirit is displeased with the inhabitant of the place and wants to make mischief or even make him move out.”

3) *We would ask if there is someone amongst the inhabitants who is the cause of the phenomena due to spontaneous and involuntary mediumship.*

“That is always necessary, because *if such is not the case, these incidents cannot happen.* A spirit lives in a place of its own choosing. As long as there is no one there whom it can use, it remains inactive, but when such a person appears, it entertains itself as much as it can.

4) *Is the presence of this person in the place itself indispensable?*

“Normally yes, and that is the case in this particular situation. That is why I said that these incidents could not be happening otherwise. But I do not mean to generalize. There are in fact cases where the medium’s presence in the place itself is not necessary.”

5) *Since such spirits are of a lower order, is the aptitude for serving as their auxiliary an unfavorable assumption about the individual? Does it indicate an affinity for beings of this nature?*

“Not exactly, because this aptitude results from a physical disposition. Nevertheless, it almost always indicates a materialistic tendency that would preferably not exist, because the more morally evolved a person is, the more he or she attracts good spirits, who necessarily repel the evil ones.”

6) *Where does the spirit go in search of the objects it utilizes?*

“It almost always finds these objects in the place itself or in the vicinity. A force that proceeds from the spirit flings them through the air and causes them to fall wherever it wishes.”

7) *Since spontaneous manifestations are often allowed and even caused for the purpose of convincing disbelievers, it seems to us that if some of these individuals were themselves their target, they would be forced to yield to the evidence. People often complain of not having*

witnessed conclusive facts. Wouldn't it depend on spirits to provide them with appreciable proof?

“Don't atheists and materialists witness at every moment the effects of the power of God and of thought? But this does not prevent them from denying both God and the soul. Did the miracles of Jesus convert all his contemporaries? Didn't the Pharisees, who said to him, “Master, show us a sign”, resemble those who today ask you to show them manifestations? If they fail to be convinced by the marvels of creation, they will be no more affected by the appearance of spirits, even if they appear in the most obvious manner, because these individuals' pride has transformed them into stubborn mules. They would have plenty of opportunities to witness them if they sought such opportunities in good faith. That is why God does not deem it appropriate to do more for them than what God has already done for those who sincerely seek to educate themselves, because God only rewards persons of good will. Their disbelief will not impede the fulfillment of the divine will. You have already seen that it has not hindered the expansion of the Doctrine. So do not concern yourselves with their opposition, which is to the Doctrine what a shadow is to a painting: it lends it greater relief. What would be their merit if they had to be convinced by force? God leaves to them the responsibility for their own stubbornness and this responsibility is heavier than you might think. Fortunate are those who believe without having seen, said Jesus, because they do not doubt the power of God.”

8) *Do you think it would be appropriate to evoke that spirit in order to ask it for a few explanations?*

“Evoke it if you want to, but it is of a low order and its answers will be quite insignificant.”

95. Conversation with the troublesome Noyers Street spirit:

1) [*Evocation*]

“Why did you call me? Do you want me to throw some stones at you? Then, we would see you skedaddle for your lives in spite of your brave airs!”

2) *Throw all the stones you want; we still wouldn't be frightened. In fact, we would like to see if you can actually throw some.*

“Well, perhaps I couldn't right here. You have a guardian that watches so well over you.”

3) *Is there someone on Noyers Street who has helped you with the evil tricks you are playing on the inhabitants of the house?*

“Of course. I found a really good instrument, and there was no learned, wise and prudent spirit to stop me, because I am merry and sometimes I like to amuse myself.”

4) *Who has served as your instrument?*

“A maid.”

5) *She has helped you without knowing it?*

“Oh yeah! Poor girl! She got scared the most.”

6) *Do you have some hostile purpose?*

“Me? I don't have anything against anyone. But folks who feel they always have to meddle in everything will turn the matter to their own advantage.”

7) *What do you mean by that? We don't understand you.*

“I'm just trying to have fun, but you will study the incident and you'll have one more fact to prove that we exist.”

8) *You say you don't have any hostile purpose, but you have broken all the windowpanes in the place and have caused real damage.*

“That's just a minor detail.”

9) *Where did you find the objects you threw around?*

“They were all over the place. I found them in the courtyard and in the neighbors' gardens.”

10) *Did you find all of them or did you make some of them?*
(See Chap. VIII)

“I didn't create anything or compose anything.”

11) *If you hadn't found them, could you have made them?*

"That would have been tricky. But we can mix materials and make something."

12) *Now tell us how you threw them.*

"Oh, that's hard for me to say! I looked for help in the electrical composition of that girl and mixed it with mine, which is less material. So together we could carry those objects."

13) *I think you'll agree to give us some information about yourself. First, tell us if you died a long time ago.*

"A long time ago – at least fifty years."

14) *What was your job?*

"Nothing special. I was a ragpicker in this neighborhood and sometimes I got insulted because I really liked good ole Noah's red liquor. That's why I wanted them to clear out."

15) *Have you yourself and of your own free will answered our questions?*

"I had an instructor."

16) *And who is this instructor?*

"Your very kind King Louis."

We asked this question because of the nature of some of the responses, which appeared to be beyond the capability of the spirit itself both in the substance of the ideas expressed and in the form of the language. It is nothing extraordinary that he had been aided by a more enlightened spirit who wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to instruct us. This is a common occurrence, but a notable particularity in this case is that the other spirit's influence was made apparent in the handwriting itself. In the answers in which he [St. Louis] interfered, the handwriting was more regular and flowing, while in the answers of the ragpicker it was angular, rough, irregular and often barely legible, revealing a very different character.

17) *What do you do nowadays? Do you care about your future?*

“Not yet. I just wander about. I am remembered so little on the earth that no one prays for me. Since I don’t have anyone to help me, I don’t do anything.”

We will soon see how much may be contributed to the progress and relief of less evolved spirits through prayer and counsel.

18) *What was your name when you were alive?*

“Jeannet.”

19) *Very well then, Jeannet, we shall pray for you. Tell us whether this evocation has pleased or upset you.*

“It has mostly pleased me because you are nice folk, joyful and lively, although you’re a bit serious. Well, that doesn’t matter. You listened to me and I’m content.”

Jeannet

The Phenomenon of Apportation

96. This phenomenon only differs from those we dealt with above because of the benevolent intention of the spirit who produces it, by the almost always pleasing nature of the objects, and by the gentle and often delicate manner by which they are carried. The phenomenon consists in the spontaneous bringing of objects that were not in the meeting place a few moments previously. They are usually flowers, but sometimes fruit, candy, jewelry, etc.

97. We must point out, however, that this particular phenomenon is one that most lends itself to being imitated, and it is therefore necessary to be forewarned against fraud. We know that the art of stage magic can produce experiences of this type. However, even if we were not confronted with a professional, we could easily be fooled by a skillful and self-interested maneuver. The best of all guarantees is, first, the *character*, the *known honesty*

and the *absolute disinterestedness* of the individuals who experiment with these effects; second, a careful examination of all the circumstances in which the phenomenon occurs; and finally, an enlightened knowledge of Spiritism, the sole means of determining if there is anything suspicious about the phenomenon.

A Spirit's Dissertation on Apportation

98. The explanation concerning apportations and physical manifestations in general has been notably summarized in the following dissertation by a spirit whose communications bear the incontestable stamp of depth and logic. Many more of his explanations will appear over the course of this work. He has made himself known as Erastus, a disciple of St. Paul, and is the protector spirit of the medium who serves to interpret him:

“In order to experience phenomena of this order, it is indispensable to employ mediums whom I shall call ‘sensitives’, that is, gifted to the highest degree with the mediumistic faculties of expansion and penetrability. The easily-excitabile nervous system of these mediums enables them, by means of certain vibrations, to profusely project their animalized fluid all around them.

“Impressionable natures, those individuals whose nerves vibrate at the least emotion, who respond to the lightest sensation that influences them mentally or physically, internally or externally, are the most capable of becoming excellent mediums for the physical effects of tangibility and apportation. In fact, their nervous system, which is almost entirely deprived of the refractory envelope, which normally isolates this system in most incarnates, renders them appropriate for the development of these phenomena. Thus, a subject of this nature, whose other faculties are not hostile toward mediumization, will more easily precipitate the phenomena of tangibility, raps within walls and furniture, *intelligent* movings-about, and even the suspension in the air of

any heavy, inert matter. The same results will be obtained with greater certainty if instead of just one medium there are several, equally endowed mediums available.

“But from the production of such phenomena to the obtaining of apportations there is a huge gap, for in the latter case, not only is the job of the spirit more complex and difficult, but it can only operate using a single mediumistic instrument; that is, several mediums cannot contribute simultaneously to the production of the same phenomenon. On the contrary, it may even be that the presence of certain persons who are antipathetic to the operating spirit will radically hinder its action. To these very important reasons we will also add that apportations always require the greatest concentration, and at the same time, the greatest diffusion of certain fluids that can only be obtained from extremely well-gifted mediums; in a word, mediums whose *electro-mediumistic* instrument is well conditioned.

“Normally, apportionment phenomena are and will continue to be exceedingly rare. I do not need to show why they are and will continue to be less frequent than the other phenomena of tangibility; from what I have already stated, you yourselves can infer why. Moreover, these phenomena are of such a nature that not all mediums can produce them, and not all spirits can induce them; in fact, between the spirit and the medium a certain affinity, a certain analogy, in a word, a certain similarity must exist that enables the expansive part of the perispiritual fluid¹⁸ of the medium to mix, unite and combine with that of the spirit who desires to perform an apportionment. This fusion must occur in such a way that the resultant force becomes, so to speak, *one*; that is, in the

¹⁸ We have seen that when trying to express a new idea for which language does not yet possess the proper term, the Spirits know perfectly well how to create neologisms. Such words as *electro-mediumistic*, and *perispiritual* are not ours. Those who criticize us for having created the words *Spiritist*, *Spiritism* and *perispirit*, which had no analogous terms, can also make the same criticism to the Spirits themselves. – Auth.

same way that an electric current acting upon charcoal produces a single focus of light. You may ask why this union, this fusion, is necessary. It is necessary because for the production of these phenomena, the essential properties of the spirit agent must be augmented by certain mediumized properties since the *vital fluid*, which is indispensable for the production of these mediumistic phenomena and is the *exclusive* property of incarnate spirits, must necessarily impregnate the spirit agent. Only then can the spirit agent, by means of certain properties of your environment, which are unknown to you, isolate, render invisible and move certain material objects and even individuals as well.

“For now, I am not allowed to reveal to you the particular laws that govern the gases and fluids that surround you. However, before many years have passed, before the duration of a normal incarnate existence has expired, the explanation of such laws and phenomena will be revealed to you, and you will see the appearance and development of a new variety of mediums who will fall into a particular cataleptic state as soon as they are mediumized.

“You have seen how many difficulties are involved in the production of apportations. You can logically conclude that phenomena of this nature are extremely rare, as I have already stated; so much more reason for spirits not to trouble themselves with producing them, because it requires on their part an almost-materialistic effort, which is tedious and wearisome to them. Besides, it so happens that very frequently, despite the spirit’s energy and will, the state of the medium sets up an insurmountable barrier.

“It is therefore obvious (and I have no doubt that you will accept the fact) that the perceptible phenomena of raps, movements and levitation are simple in nature and can be performed by concentrating and dilating certain fluids, and they can also be caused and precipitated by the will and effort of capable mediums

if they are seconded by friendly and benevolent spirits. Apportation phenomena, on the other hand, are multiple, complex in nature and require the existence of special conditions. In addition, they can be performed only when just one spirit and one medium are involved, and besides all the resources needed to produce tangible phenomena, they require a very special combination to isolate and render invisible the object or objects to be apported.

“Every one of you Spiritists has comprehended my explanations and has realized perfectly well that this concentration of special fluids is what is needed to produce the mobility and tactility of inert matter. You have accepted it just as you have accepted the phenomena of electricity and magnetism, which are so analogous to mediumistic phenomena, and which are, so to speak, their confirmation and development. As for disbelievers and academicians (the latter are even worse than the former) it is not my duty to convince them, and I am not even concerned about them. They will someday be convinced by the factual evidence, for they will have to bow down before the unanimous testimony of spirit phenomena, just as they have already been forced to do with respect to other phenomena that they rejected at first.

“To sum up: while the phenomena of tangibility are frequent, those of apportation are very rare, since the conditions needed to produce them are quite difficult to ensure. Consequently, no medium can say, ‘At such and such time and moment I will obtain an apportation’, because often the spirit itself finds that it has been prevented from doing it. I should add that these phenomena become doubly difficult to produce in public, where there are almost always energetic refractory elements that paralyze the efforts of the spirit itself, and even more so the action of the medium. On the other hand, you are aware that such phenomena are often produced spontaneously in private meetings, usually without the medium’s knowledge and premeditation, but rarely occur when

he or she has been forewarned. This should lead you to conclude that there is a legitimate reason for being suspicious every time a medium boasts of being able to obtain them at will or, in other words, to give orders to spirits as if they were servants, which is simply absurd. You already know the rule that spirit phenomena are not to be used to put on shows or to entertain the curious. If a few spirits are involved in these sorts of things, it can only involve very simple phenomena and not those which, like apportations and other similar ones, demand exceptional conditions.

“Remember, Spiritists, that if it is absurd to systematically reject all beyond-the-grave phenomena outright, it is also imprudent to blindly accept everything. When a phenomenon of tangibility, apparition or apportion occurs spontaneously and unexpectedly, accept it. But I will never tire of repeating: accept nothing blindly; every fact must be submitted to a meticulous, in-depth and critical examination because, believe me, Spiritism, so rich in sublime and grand phenomena, has nothing to gain from the insignificant manifestations that skillful stage magicians can imitate.

“I know fully well that you will say, ‘But such phenomena are useful for convincing disbelievers’. You must understand, however, that if you had no other means for convincing them, you would not have even a fraction of the Spiritists that you can count today. Rather, speak to their hearts; that is how most conversions will occur. If you find it appropriate for certain individuals, then resort to material phenomena, or at least present them in such a way that they will not be misinterpreted. And, especially, observe the normal conditions under which these phenomena occur, because if they are introduced inappropriately, they will serve as arguments for disbelievers instead of means of convincing them.”

Erastus

99. This phenomenon displays a highly remarkable characteristic: some mediums can only obtain it while in a somnambulistic state – an easily explainable fact. Somnambulists display a natural release, a sort of isolation of their spirit and perispirit, which will facilitate the combining of the required fluids. Such has been the case of the apportations that we have witnessed.

The following questions were asked of the spirit who produced the phenomenon, but its responses sometimes were affected by its lack of knowledge. Therefore, we submitted them to the Spirit Erastus, who was much more enlightened from a theoretical point of view, and who complemented the answers with his very judicious comments. One was the artisan; the other the scholar, and a comparison of these two intelligences is a very instructive study in itself, for it shows clearly that it is not enough simply to be a spirit in order to understand everything.

1) *Would you please tell us why the apportations that you produce are only accomplished during the magnetic sleep of the medium?*

“Because of the medium’s nature. The phenomena that I produce while he is sleeping I could equally produce in a different medium who is awake.”

2) *Why do you take so long in bringing objects to us, and why do you arouse the covetousness of the medium, exciting his desire to get the promised object?*

“I need time to prepare the fluids that I will use to bring the object. As for my exciting the medium, I often do it only to entertain those present as well as the somnambulist himself.”

Remark by Erastus: The spirit who has responded does not know any better. He is not aware of the usefulness of such covetous excitement, which he instinctively arouses without comprehending its effect. He thinks he uses it as entertainment, while he in fact unknowingly stimulates a greater emission of fluid. This is a result of the difficulty that

this type of phenomenon presents, a difficulty that is even greater when it is not spontaneous – especially with some mediums.

3) *Since the production of this phenomenon depends on the special nature of this particular medium, would it be possible to produce it more easily and rapidly by using a different medium?*

“The production of the phenomenon depends on the nature of this medium and it can only be produced by mediums of like nature. As for rapidity, we find the habit of frequently using the same medium to be of great help.”

4) *Can the individuals present influence the phenomenon somehow?*

“Whenever there is disbelief or opposition by some of them, it can create serious problems for us. We prefer to perform our experiments with believers and with those versed in Spiritism, but that does not mean that ill will can completely paralyze us.”

5) *Where do you get the flowers and candy you bring to us?*

“I get the flowers from various gardens that I find pleasing.”

6) *And the candy? The candy maker must have noticed the disappearance.*

“I get it wherever I like. The candy maker doesn’t notice anything since I put other candy in its place.”

7) *But the rings are valuable; where did you get those? Haven’t you harmed whomever you took them from?*

“I took them from places unknown to anybody and in a way that it wouldn’t harm anyone.”

Remark by Erastus: I think the matter was explained incompletely due to the lack of understanding of the spirit who responded. Yes, there could have been real harm, but this spirit did not want to appear to have stolen anything. An object can only be replaced by one that is identical, with the same shape and the same value. Hence, if the spirit saw the possibility of replacing an object that it took with a similar one, it would not have had any reason to take the object in the first place, because it could have simply used the replacement.

8) *Is it possible to apport flowers from another planet?*

“No, that is not possible for me.”

(To Erastus) *“Do other spirits have such power?”*

(Erastus) “No, it is impossible because of the environmental differences.”

9) *Could you bring flowers from another hemisphere – from the tropics, for example?*

“Since it is still the earth, I can.”

10) *Can you make the objects you brought disappear and return them?*

“As easily as I brought them. I could return them at will.”

11) *Isn't producing the phenomenon of apportation troublesome for you? Doesn't it cause you any problems?*

“It isn't troublesome when I have due permission. But it could cause big problems if I wanted to produce them without being authorized.”

Remark by Erastus: He does not want to say that it is problematic, although it really is, because he is forced to perform an operation that is material, so to speak.

12) *What difficulties might you encounter?*

“None, besides bad fluidic conditions, which could be unfavorable.”

13) *How do you bring the object? Do you carry it in your hands?*

“No. I enfold it within myself.”

Remark by Erastus: He does not explain very clearly how he does it, because he does not actually enfold the object within his person. However, since his personal fluid can dilate itself, and is penetrable and expandable, he combines a portion of it with a portion of the medium's own animalized fluid. It is within this mixture that he hides and carries the object chosen for apportation. So it is incorrect for him to say that he enfolds it within himself.

14) *Could you just as easily carry a heavier object – one hundred pounds, for example?*

“Weight doesn’t matter. We bring flowers because they are more pleasant than a weightier object.”

Remark by Erastus: That is correct. He could carry two hundred or four hundred-pound objects, because the gravity that exists for you is non-existent for him. But here again he does not really understand what is happening. The mass of the combined fluids is proportional to the mass of the object. In other words, the force must be in proportion to the resistance. Thus, if a spirit only carries a flower or other light object, it is often because it cannot find either in the medium or itself the elements needed for any greater effort.

15) *Are there cases where objects disappear for some unknown reason, but which are in fact taken by spirits?*

“That happens a lot – more often than you might think. It may be remedied by simply asking the spirit to return the object that disappeared.”

Remark by Erastus: That is true, but sometimes what has been taken is taken for good, because such objects that disappear from the house are almost always taken a long ways away. However, since the taking of objects requires the same fluidic conditions as apportations, it can only occur with the help of a medium endowed with special faculties. Thus, when something has disappeared, it much more likely happened due to your own carelessness rather than because of some spirit.

16) *Are there some instances that we regard as natural phenomena, but which are actually due to the action of certain spirits?*

“Your days are filled with such occurrences that you don’t understand, because you have not thought about them, but which with a little reflection you could clearly see.”

Remark by Erastus: You mustn’t attribute to spirits what has actually resulted from human effort. However, you should believe in their

concealed and continuous influence, which produces all around you a thousand circumstances, thousands of incidents that are required for fulfilling your actions and existence.

17) *Among the various objects used in apportations, aren't there those that can be fabricated by the spirits themselves; that is, spontaneously produced by the modifications they can perform on the fluid or universal element?*

"I myself can't do it because I don't have permission. Only a high order spirit could do it."

18) *The other day, how did you introduce those objects into the room while the doors were shut?*

"I brought them with me, enfolded, like I said, within my own substance. I don't know what else to say, since it is inexplicable."

19) *How did you make objects that were invisible a moment before become visible?*

"I withdrew the matter that had enveloped them."

Remark by Erastus: It is not matter per se that had enveloped them, but rather a fluid taken half from the perispirit of the medium and half from the spirit."

20) (To Erastus) *Can an object be carried into a completely sealed place; in other words, can the spirit spiritualize a material object so that it can pass through matter?*

(Erastus) "That is a complex question. The spirit can render the objects it carries invisible but not penetrable. It cannot undo the aggregation of matter, which would be the destruction of the object. But by making it invisible, it can carry it wherever it wants and free it at the best time to make it appear. It is quite a different matter with objects that we compose ourselves. In these cases, we only introduce the elements of matter, and since these elements are essentially penetrable (since we ourselves can penetrate and

cross through denser objects with the same ease that solar rays pass through a window), we can certainly state that we can introduce an object into a place no matter how closed up it may be – but only in such a particular case.¹⁹

¹⁹ Concerning the theory of the spontaneous formation of objects, see below, chap. VIII, entitled *Laboratory of the Invisible World* – Auth.

CHAPTER VI



Visual Manifestations

• Questions concerning Apparitions •
Theoretical Essay on Apparitions • Globular
Spirits • The Hallucination Theory

Questions concerning Apparitions

100. Of all spirit manifestations, the most interesting are undoubtedly those in which spirits can render themselves visible. From an examination of this type of phenomenon we will see that, like all the others, there is nothing at all supernatural about it. First, we will provide the responses by the Spirits on the subject.

1) *Can spirits render themselves visible?*

“Yes, especially during sleep. However, certain individuals can also see them while awake, although that is less frequent.”

While the body rests, the spirit loosens the material ties, becomes freer and can more easily see other spirits and communicate with them. A dream is only a recollection of this state. When we remember nothing, we say that we have not dreamed at all, but the soul has nevertheless

seen and enjoyed its liberty. Here, we are dealing more particularly with apparitions that occur during the waking state.²⁰

2) *Do spirits who visibly manifest themselves belong more to one specific category than to another?*

“No. They can belong to all the categories – the highest down to the lowest.”

3) *Are all spirits permitted to manifest themselves visibly?*

“All may do so, but they do not always receive permission or even desire to.”

4) *For what purpose do they manifest themselves visibly?*

“It depends on their nature; their purpose may be either good or evil.”

5) *Why would they be permitted if their purpose is evil?*

“It would be allowed to test those to whom they appear. Thus, the spirit’s intention may be evil, but the result may be good.”

6) *What is the purpose of spirits who render themselves visible with evil intentions?*

“They appear out of a desire to frighten, and often out of revenge.”

– *What is the purpose of spirits who appear with good intentions?*

“To console those who are mourning their departure in order to prove to them that they continue to exist and are close by. They might also appear to give advice and sometimes to ask for assistance for themselves.”

7) *What harm would there be if the possibility of seeing spirits were permanent and widespread among human beings? Wouldn’t that be a way to remove all doubt from the minds of disbelievers?*

“Since human beings are constantly surrounded by spirits, it would be troublesome and would hamper them in their daily activities if they could see spirits all the time. It would also in

²⁰ Concerning the state of the spirit during sleep see *The Spirits’ Book*, The Emancipation of the Soul, no. 409 – Auth.

most cases take away their initiative, while, on the other hand, if they believe that they are alone, they will act more freely. As for disbelievers, there are many other means available for them to be convinced if they would take advantage of them and if they were not blinded by pride. You are well aware that there are people who have seen but do not believe nonetheless because they say that they have experienced an illusion. Do not be concerned about such people; God is responsible for them.”

It would be very inconvenient if we were able to see spirits about us all the time. It would be like seeing the air that surrounds us, or the myriad of microscopic animals that swarm around us. From this we must conclude that what God has done is well done, and that God knows better than we do what is best for us.

8) *If being able to see spirits might be inconvenient, why is it permitted in certain cases?*

“To provide proof that everything does not end with the death of the body and that the soul retains its individuality after death. This temporary glimpse is enough to provide such proof and to attest to the presence of your friends at your side, but it is not as inconvenient as being able to see them all the time would be.”

9) *On more highly evolved worlds than our own, are spirits seen more frequently?*

“The more humans approach their spirit nature, the easier it becomes for them to communicate with spirits. It is because your bodies are so dense that it is rarer and more difficult to perceive ethereal beings.”

10) *Is it reasonable to be frightened at the apparition of a spirit?*

“Anyone who reflects on the matter will understand that a spirit, whatever it may appear as, is less dangerous than a living person. Moreover, spirits go everywhere and you do not have to see them in order to know that they are at your side. A spirit who

desires to harm someone can do so more surely without being seen. A spirit is not dangerous because it is a spirit, but because of the influence it can exert upon a person's thoughts, drawing him or her away from the good and pushing him or her toward evil."

People who are afraid of the dark and of being alone rarely comprehend the cause of their fear. They would not know what to say if asked what they are afraid of, but they should certainly be more afraid of meeting other human beings than spirits because an evildoer is more dangerous while alive than after death. A lady whom we know saw an apparition one night in her room. It was so well defined that she believed that there was actually someone present. Her first sensation was terror; however, upon assuring herself that there was no one else, she said to herself, "It looks like it *was only a spirit*, so I can sleep in peace."

11) *Can anyone who sees a spirit talk to it?*

"Certainly. And that is exactly what should be done in such a case. Ask the spirit who it is, what it wants and what can be done for it. If it is unhappy and suffering, showing sympathy will bring it relief. If it is a benevolent spirit, it may intend to offer good advice."

– *In such cases, how will the spirit respond?*

"Sometimes by articulating sounds as a living person would, but usually by transmitting its thoughts."

12) *Do spirits who appear to have wings really have them or are they only a symbolic appearance?*

"Spirits do not have wings. They do not need them since as spirits they can go anywhere. But they appear in this form in order to impress the person to whom they show themselves: some appear wearing their normal clothing, others in drapery and some with wings, as a characterization of the spiritual category they are representing."

13) *Are the persons we see while dreaming always who they appear to be?*

“They are almost always the same ones; your spirit goes to meet them or they come to meet you.”

14) *Couldn't deceptive spirits take on the appearance of someone dear to us in order to mislead us?*

“They take on fantastic appearances only in order to have fun at your expense, but there are matters that they are not allowed to play with.”

15) *Since thought is a kind of evocation, we can understand that it can induce a spirit to appear. But why is it that the persons whom we think about the most and whom we most ardently desire to see again almost never appear to us in our dreams, while we often see others who do not interest us in the least and whom we never think about?*

“It is not always possible for spirits to show themselves visibly even in dreams and in spite of your desire to see them. Causes apart from their will may prevent them. Besides, it is almost always a trial, which even your most ardent desire cannot avert. As for individuals who do not interest you, it is possible that they are thinking of you, even though you are not thinking of them. Moreover, you have no idea about relationships in the spirit world, where you might meet up with a multitude of close, old and new acquaintances, whom you have no memory of at all while awake.”

When there is no means of verifying visions or apparitions, we can almost certainly treat them as being only hallucinations. However, when they are confirmed by the circumstances, we cannot attribute them to our imagination. Such are, for example, apparitions at the time of death – while asleep or awake – involving persons whom we had not been thinking about, and who by various signs have come to reveal the absolutely unexpected circumstances of their passing. In such instances, we have seen horses rear up and balk before apparitions that frightened their riders. Imagination may be something that humans are endowed

with, but the same cannot be said for animals. Moreover, if the images we see while dreaming are always the result of our waking concerns, that would not explain why we hardly ever dream of the matters that we have been thinking about the most.

16) *Why do certain visions happen more frequently during illness?*

“They happen just as frequently in the state of perfect health, but during illness the material ties loosen and the weakness of the body allows more freedom to the spirit, which then more easily communicates with other spirits.”

17) *Spontaneous apparitions seem to occur more often in certain countries. Are the members of some cultures more gifted than others at receiving these manifestations?*

“Have you made a historical registration of every apparition? Apparitions, noises and all other manifestations occur equally all over the world, but they display their own particular characteristics according to the cultures among which they occur. For example, among those where writing is not very widespread there are no writing mediums; among others they abound. Also, among the former, manifestations involving noises and movements of objects are more frequent than intelligent communications, which are less appreciated and sought after.”

18) *Why do apparitions occur more at night? Mightn't this show that they are the effect of silence and darkness upon one's imagination?*

“For the same reason you see the stars at night and not in full daylight. Intense lighting can eclipse a delicate apparition. Nevertheless, it is wrong to suppose that night has something special about it in this regard. Question those who have seen apparitions and you will find that most have actually occurred during the day.”

The phenomena of apparitions are much more frequent and common than one might think, but many persons do not reveal them either

because they fear being ridiculed or because they attribute them to illusion. If they seem to occur more abundantly among certain cultures it is because such cultures have more carefully preserved their correct or erroneous traditions, which are almost always exaggerated by a fascination for the extraordinary in areas that are more or less disposed to them. Furthermore, credulity sees supernatural effects in the most ordinary phenomena: the silence of solitude, the steep slope of ravines, the rustle of trees, the roar of storms, the echo from mountains, the fantastic shapes of clouds, shadows and mirages. Anything can lend itself to deluding simple and naively imaginative people, who recount in good faith what they have seen or believe they have seen. However, alongside fiction there is reality, and a serious study of Spiritism can set people free from the foolish accessories of superstition.

19) *Does the seeing of spirits occur in the normal state or only during ecstasy?*

“It can occur under perfectly normal conditions; however, those who see them are almost always in a special state which approaches ecstasy, and which gives them a kind of second sight.”
(See *The Spirits’ Book*, no. 447)

20) *Do those who see spirits do so with their eyes?*

“They think they do, but in reality it is their soul that sees them. This is proven by the fact that they can still see them with their eyes closed.”

21) *How can a spirit render itself visible?*

“The principle is the same as for all other manifestations. It resides in the properties of the perispirit, which can undergo as many modifications as the spirit sees fit.”

22) *Can a spirit per se make itself visible or can it only do so with the aid of the perispirit?*

“In your material state, spirits can only manifest themselves with the aid of their semi-material envelope, which is the intermediary through which they act upon your senses. Under this

envelope, they can appear in human form or any other, whether in dreams or in the waking state, whether in full light or in darkness.”

23) *Could we say that it is through a condensation of the perispirit's fluid that the spirit makes itself visible?*

“Condensation is not the right word. It only serves to make a comparison that can help you understand the phenomenon, while in reality there is no actual condensation. The combining of fluids produces a special condition in the perispirit which has no analogy for you but which renders the spirit visible nonetheless.”

24) *Are the spirits who appear always intangible and inaccessible?*

“In their normal state they are intangible like in a dream. Nevertheless, they can make an impression upon your sense of touch and leave signs of their presence. In some cases, they can even render themselves tangible for a moment, which proves the existence of some kind of matter between them and you.”

25) *Is everyone capable of seeing spirits?*

“During sleep, yes, but not while awake. During sleep, the soul sees directly without an intermediary; while you are awake, the soul is influenced by the organs to different degrees. Thus, the conditions are not the same in the two instances.”

26) *What does the faculty for seeing spirits in the waking state depend on?*

“It depends on the organism and the greater or lesser ease with which the fluid of the seer combines with that of the spirit. Hence, it is not enough for the spirit simply to want to show itself; the spirit must find the required aptitude in the individual to whom it wants to show itself.”

– *Can this faculty be developed through practice?*

“It can be as can all other faculties. However, it is a faculty that is better left to develop naturally rather than artificially, because in the latter case there is a risk of overexciting the imagination. The

common and permanent ability to see spirits is exceptional and normal human conditions are not conducive to it.”

27) *Can spirit apparitions be artificially induced?*

“Sometimes that is possible, but very rarely. They are almost always spontaneous. For someone to see spirits, they must be endowed with a special faculty.”

28) *Can spirits render themselves visible in other forms besides the human one?*

“The human form is the normal one. A spirit can vary its appearance, but it nearly always retains the human form.”

– *Can't they appear in the form of a flame?*

“They can produce flames of light as well as any other effect to demonstrate their presence, but such attributes are not of the spirits themselves. A flame is usually an optical effect or an emanation of the perispirit. In every case it is only a part of the perispirit, which only appears in its entirety during visions.”

29) *What are we to think of the belief that attributes will-o'-the-wisps to souls or spirits?*

“Superstition resulting from ignorance. The physical cause of will-o'-the-wisps is well known.”

– *Was the blue flame that appeared over the head of Servius Tullius²¹ while he was an infant real or only a legend?*

“It was real, produced by his familiar spirit, who wanted to warn his mother. Because she was a seeing medium, she saw the radiation of her son's protector spirit. Seeing mediums vary in their degree of perception just as writing mediums vary in their ability to write. While this mother saw only a flame, another medium might have seen the spirit itself.”

30) *Can spirits show themselves in the form of an animal?*

“That can happen, but low order spirits are always the ones who take on such appearances. In every case, however, it is a

²¹ Sixth legendary king of Rome, 578-535B.C. – Tr.

temporary appearance, because it would be absurd to believe that an animal could be the incarnation of a spirit. Animals are always animals and nothing more.”

Only sheer superstition could lead to the belief that certain animals are incarnations of spirits. One would have to have a very complacent or impressionable imagination to see something supernatural in the somewhat bizarre circumstances in which animals sometimes present themselves. Fear often causes one to see something that does not really exist. Nonetheless, fear is not always the source of this idea. We knew a lady, who was in fact quite intelligent, who was extremely fond of a certain black cat because she believed that it possessed a *supra-animal* nature. However, she had never heard mention of Spiritism. If she had been familiar with it, she would have understood how foolish her predilection was, since the Doctrine would have disclosed the impossibility of such a metamorphosis.

Theoretical Essay on Apparitions

101. The most common manifestations of apparitions occur in dreams during sleep. These are visions. We cannot here examine all the particularities that dreams can present, but we will sum them up by stating what they may be: an actual vision of present or absent things; a retrospective vision of the past; in certain exceptional cases, a presentiment of the future. Frequently, they are also allegorical images that good spirits present to us as useful warnings or beneficial advice; if they are imperfect spirits, they may use them to mislead us and encourage our passions. The theory that follows below is applicable to dreams and all other cases of apparitions. (See *The Spirits' Book*, nos. 400 ff.)

We shall not offend our readers' common sense if we refute the absurd and foolish notions of what is entailed in *popular* dream interpretation.

102. Apparitions per se occur during the waking state, when the individual is in full enjoyment and has the complete freedom of his or her faculties. They generally appear in a vaporous and diaphanous form that is sometimes vague and indistinct. When they first appear, they are almost always a whitish light, whose contours gradually become more definite. At other times, their forms are clearly accentuated and the minutest traces of the face can be distinguished to such a degree that it can be precisely described. Their appearance and other characteristics are similar to those of the spirit when it was incarnate.

Since a spirit can assume any appearance, it presents itself with the one by which it can best be identified, if that is what it wants. Thus, even though it has no actual corporeal handicap as a spirit, it may appear to be maimed, lame, humpbacked, wounded or scarred if that is what is needed to identify it. For example, Aesop is not deformed as a spirit, but if we would evoke him, he would appear ugly and humpbacked, wearing his traditional garb no matter how many lives he has lived in the meantime. One particularity worth noting is that except in special circumstances the least precise components of an apparition are the lower limbs, while the head, torso, arms and hands appear clearly. Hence, we almost never see them walk – they glide like shadows. As for their garments, they are usually comprised of a sort of drapery that ends in long flowing folds. Spirits who have retained nothing of their earthly life appear with flowing and graceful hair, but the ordinary spirits of individuals with whom we are familiar usually dress as they did during the final days of their existence.

Quite often, they display attributes that are characteristic of their elevation such as a halo or wings, leading them to be regarded as angels. Others carry symbols that remind us of their earthly activities: a warrior might appear in armor, a scholar with books, an assassin with a dagger, and so on. Highly evolved spirits display

a beautiful, noble and serene figure, whereas the least evolved ones have something ferocious and bestial about them, sometimes still bearing vestiges of the crimes they committed or the tortures they suffered. The issue of clothing and accessories is perhaps the most intriguing. We shall return to discuss this in a special chapter because it is connected with other very important issues.

103. We have stated that apparitions have something vaporous about them. In some cases, we could compare them to the image reflected in an un-silvered mirror, where, despite its clearness we may also see objects that are behind the mirror. This is how seeing mediums usually perceive them. They see them come and go, enter a room or leave, circulate amongst a crowd of living persons – at least when it comes to ordinary spirits, who take an interest in everything, listen to everything that is said and take an active part in all that goes on around them. Good spirits are often seen to approach individuals in order to whisper ideas to them, to influence and comfort them, while evil spirits do so in order to mock them and to show disappointment or satisfaction at the results. In other words, spirits are the counterpart of the corporeal world.

Thus is that secret world surrounding us, in the midst of which we live without even suspecting it, just as we live among the myriad beings of the microscopic world. The microscope has revealed the infinitely tiny world, which we never suspected to exist; Spiritism, with the help of seeing mediums, has revealed the spirit world to us, which is also one of the active forces of nature. With the aid of such seeing mediums we have been able to study the invisible world and to be initiated into its customs in the same way that a culture of blind individuals would be able to study the visible world with the help of sighted persons. (See chap. XIV on Mediums, the section referring to seeing mediums)

104. A spirit who so desires and who is actually able to appear sometimes assumes an even more defined form, with all the appearances of a solid body, to the point of displaying a perfect illusion and leading us to believe that we are dealing with an actual corporeal being. In some cases and under certain circumstances, an apparition's tangibility can become real, meaning that we can touch and handle it, and feel its resistance and heat as if it were a living body. Nevertheless, such characteristics do not prevent the apparition from vanishing as quickly as a flash of lightning. In these cases, its presence is not only verified with the eyes, but with the touch as well.

If we could attribute the occurrence of a simple visual apparition to illusion or a kind of delusion, there can be no more doubt when we can hold and feel it, and when it can hold and hug us; however, tangible apparitions are the rarest. Nevertheless, those which have appeared of late under the influence of a few powerful mediums²², and which have been completely authenticated by blameless witnesses, prove and explain the historical records involving persons who have reappeared after death with all the appearances of reality. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, in spite of how extraordinary such phenomena might seem, they lose all their extraordinary character when we know about the way in which they are produced and when we understand that, far from representing a derogation from natural laws, they only display a new application of them.

105. By its very nature and in its normal state, the perispirit is invisible. The same may be said of countless fluids that we know to exist, but which we have never seen. But like certain fluids, it can undergo modifications that render it visible, whether by a sort of condensation or by a change in its molecular arrangement. This

²² Mr. Home, among others – Auth.

is when it can appear to us in a vaporous form. Condensation (we must not take this word literally; we only use it due to the lack of another and as a simple instrument of comparison) can be such that the perispirit acquires the properties of a solid and tangible body, but it can instantaneously return to its ethereal and invisible state. We can understand this process by comparing it to steam, which can go from invisibility to a mist, then to a liquid and finally to a solid, and *vice-versa*.

These diverse states of the perispirit, however, are due to the will of the spirit itself and not to physical or outside causes, as is the case with our gases. A spirit can appear to us when it places its perispirit in the state necessary to become visible, but a simple desire is not enough to produce the effect because the modification of the perispirit can only occur when it combines its own fluids with the specific fluid of a medium. This combining is not always possible, which explains why it is uncommon for spirits to make themselves visible.

Consequently, it is not enough for the spirit to want to appear or for a person to want to see it; the combining of the fluids of both is required, which means that there must be a kind of affinity between them, and also that the emission of the medium's fluid must be quite abundant in order to bring about the perispirit's transformation. There are probably other conditions that we do not yet know about. Finally, the spirit must have received permission to appear to a person, which is not always granted, and if so, only in certain circumstances for reasons that we are not yet able to ascertain.

106. Another property of the perispirit is the penetrability inherent to its ethereal nature. No type of matter can obstruct it; it can pass through anything as easily as light passes through transparent objects. Hence, there are no means of preventing spirits from entering a place. They can visit prisoners in their cells as easily as they can visit someone in the middle of an open field.

107. Apparitions during the waking state are not rare, nor do they comprise a novelty; they have occurred throughout history, which offers us a large number of such cases. However, without having to resort to the past, they have frequently been encountered in our own times. Many people have seen them and have at first taken them for what convention has called hallucinations. They are especially common in cases where persons have died somewhere far away, and have come to visit relatives and friends. They often do not have a clear objective, but we can state that spirits who appear in this way are generally drawn to do so out of sympathy. If we would examine our memories, we would find that there are few people who have not heard of incidents of this kind, and their authenticity can no longer be held in doubt.

Globular Spirits

108. To the foregoing considerations we shall add an examination of certain optical effects that have given rise to the strange theory of *globular spirits*.

Often, the air is not entirely clean and at such times the currents of aeriform molecules and their heat-produced movement can become perfectly visible. Some people have actually taken this phenomenon to be masses of spirits fluttering around in the air. It is enough only to mention this theory in order to refute it; nonetheless, there is another kind of illusion that is no less bizarre, and against which we must also be on guard.

The watery fluid in the eye sometimes contains specks that are barely perceptible and which have lost some of their transparency. These specks are like opaque objects suspended in the fluid, whose movement they follow. They appear as tiny disks, barely one sixteenth of an inch in diameter but augmented by refraction – which appear to float in the air some distance away.

We have seen people take these disks to be spirits who follow them everywhere, and in their enthusiasm they see figures in the nuances of the iridescence. This is about as rational as seeing the figure of a man on the moon. It would only take a simple observation on their part to bring themselves back to reality.

They say that these disks or medallions not only follow them but that they also duplicate their movements; they go to the right and to the left, up and down, or stop, according to their head movements. There is nothing strange about this, since the seat of the phenomenon lies in the ocular globe and must naturally obey its movements. If they were actually spirits, people would have to admit that the disks display a too-highly mechanical movement for intelligent and free beings – a tiresome role, even for low order spirits – and a role even more incompatible with our ideas concerning high order spirits. Some people have even taken the black or opaque specks that sometimes appear in the eye to be evil spirits.

Both the disks and the black specks have a wave-like movement that is restricted to a certain angle, and what increases the illusion is that they do not abruptly follow the movements of the line of vision. The reason is simple. The opaque specks in the watery fluid – the primary cause of the phenomenon – are, as we have stated, suspended in the liquid and tend to float downwards. When they rise, they do so with the movement of the eyes from the bottom upwards, but when they reach a certain height, they become fixed, and they are seen to float back down and stop by themselves. They are extremely mobile because it only takes an imperceptible movement of the eye to make them change direction and quickly travel the whole width of the arc in the space where the image is produced. As long as it has not been proven that an image has its own spontaneous and intelligent movement, one can only see it as an optical and physiological phenomenon.

The same thing happens with the 'stars' sometimes produced by the contraction of the eye muscles, and which appear in more or less tight bunches. These are probably due to the phosphorescent electricity of the iris because they are usually confined to the circle of that part of the eye.

Similar types of these illusions can only be the result of imperfect observation. Whoever has seriously studied the nature of spirits through the means offered by practical Spiritism will understand how naïve they are. Just as we combat the foolhardy theories that attack spirit communications when such theories are based on an ignorance of the facts, we must also seek to destroy the erroneous ideas that result more from enthusiasm than mental reflection, and which therefore cause more harm than good to disbelievers, who are already naturally disposed to looking for the ridiculous side of the matter.

109. As we have seen, the perispirit is the principle for all manifestations. Understanding it has given us the key to numerous phenomena; it has led to a large advance in Spiritist science and has enabled it to enter upon a new path by removing any relic of the miraculous from it. Thanks to the Spirits themselves (we must always point out that it was they who taught us the way), we have found in the perispirit an explanation for spirits' action upon matter, the moving about of inert objects, noises and apparitions. In the perispirit we will find an explanation for many other phenomena yet to be examined before proceeding to a study of the communications per se. We will understand these communications much better the more completely we understand their fundamental causes. If we understand this principle, it will be easier for us to apply it to the various phenomena that may present themselves for observation.

110. However, far be it from us to regard the theory that we are presenting as absolute and as being the last word on the issue.

It will undoubtedly be completed or corrected later on through new studies, but no matter how incomplete or imperfect it may be at present, it can always help if we understand the possibility of the phenomena resulting from causes that have nothing supernatural about them. If it is a theory, we nevertheless cannot deny the merit of its reasonableness and probability, and that it is worth as much as all the explanations that our detractors have attempted to use in order to prove that everything involving spirit phenomena is no more than illusion, phantasmagoria and deception.

The Hallucination Theory

111. Those who do not accept the existence of the incorporeal and invisible world think they can explain everything away with the word *hallucination*. The definition of this word is well known: it means the error, the illusion of those who believe they experience certain perceptions when in fact they do not (it comes from the Latin *allucinari*, to err, from *ad lucem*). But we know that scholars still have not explained its physiological cause.

Since it seems that optics and physiology no longer hold any secrets from these learned individuals, why haven't they been able to explain the nature and origin of the images that are shown to the spirit under certain circumstances? They want to explain everything using the laws of matter, and should therefore be able to provide a theory of hallucination based upon such laws – good or bad, it would at least be an explanation.

112. The cause of dreams has never been explained by science. It attributes them to an effect of the imagination but it does not tell us what this imagination is or how it produces the images that are so clear and distinct, which at times appear to us. Thus, they explain one unknown thing with another that is even

less known – everything remains the same. They say that dreams should be regarded as a memory of our waking state concerns. However, even if we were to accept this solution, it would actually resolve nothing; we would still need to know what this magic mirror is that retains the impression of such concerns. Above all, how can they explain the visions of real things that we have never seen before or thought of in the waking state? Only Spiritism can provide us with the key to those strange phenomena that pass unnoticed simply because they are so common, as are all the wonders of nature that we so undervalue.

Scholars have not wanted to deal with hallucinations, but whether they are real or not, they are a phenomenon that physiology should be able to explain; otherwise, it would run the risk of exposing its incompetence. If someday a scholar were to decide to give not only a definition but a physiological explanation of this phenomenon, we would still have to see if that theory resolved all the cases, if it omitted the very common occurrences of apparitions of persons at the moment of death, and if it clarified the coincidence of the person's apparition with his or her death. If these were isolated events, they might be attributed to chance, but since they are quite frequent, chance cannot produce such recurrences. If the one who saw the apparition had had the notion that the person was about to die, then fine; however, in most cases, the apparition involves someone who was not thought about in the least. Consequently, imagination has nothing to do with it.

Still less can the knowledge about the completely unknown circumstances of death be explained away by imagination. The adherents of the hallucination theory will state that the soul (if they in fact believe in the soul) undergoes moments of over-excitation, in which the faculties are heightened. We would agree, but when what the soul sees is real, it cannot be treated as an illusion. If in this heightened excitation the soul sees something that is not present, it

is because it goes to where that something actually is, and if our soul can go to a person who is not present, then why couldn't the soul of the absent person come to us just as easily? Let those who adhere to the hallucination theory take such facts into consideration and not forget that a theory that is contradicted by the facts is necessarily erroneous or incomplete. While we await their explanation, we shall try to provide some ideas of our own on the matter.

113. The facts prove that there are true apparitions, which the Spiritist theory explains perfectly, and which can only be denied by those who accept nothing beyond the physical organism. However, apart from these real visions, aren't there also hallucinations in the normal sense of the word? We cannot doubt it. But what is their cause? The Spirits themselves have sent us in the right direction, and they have given us a complete explanation in their responses to the following questions:

– *Are sightings of apparitions always real or are they sometimes an effect of hallucination? When we see the Devil, for example, or other fantastic things while dreaming or in some other way, and which we know could not possibly exist, isn't it due to nothing more than imagination?*

“Yes, sometimes, as when someone is affected by reading certain materials or by stories of witchcraft, and then recalls them and believes he or she is seeing what does not, in fact, exist. However, we have also already stated that a spirit, by means of its semi-material envelope, can take on all sorts of shapes in order to manifest itself. Thus, a mocking spirit can appear with horns and claws if it wants to in order to mock the gullible, just as a good spirit may show itself with wings and a shining appearance.”

– *May we regard as apparitions the faces and other images that often appear when we are half asleep or when we simply have our eyes closed?*

“When the senses go numb, the spirit frees itself and can see close or far away what it would not be able to see with the eyes. These images are almost always visions, but they can also be

the effect of impressions that the sight of certain objects have left on the brain, which retains their outline just as it retains sounds. The freed spirit then sees in its own mind the impressions fixed therein like on a photographic plate. The variety and mixture of such impressions form bizarre and fleeting combinations that almost always immediately disappear despite every effort made to retain them. These fantastic apparitions should be attributed to a similar cause and they have nothing real about them; they are often produced during illness."

It is an accepted fact that the memory is the result of the impressions retained by the brain. But by what strange phenomenon is it that these impressions, so varied and numerous, are not to be confused with one another? That is an impenetrable mystery, but it is no more strange than the sound waves that crisscross through the air, but which retain their own distinctness. In a sound and well organized brain, these impressions are clear and precise; in a less favorable state, they are diluted and become confused; hence the reason for the loss of recollection or the confusion of ideas. This seems less strange if one accepts, as in phrenology, a special destination for each part or even for each fiber of the brain.

The images transmitted to the brain by the eyes leave their impression on it, which enables one to remember a picture as if it were still present, although this should always be regarded as an act of the memory since nothing is in fact seen. Moreover, in the state of emancipation, the soul can see the brain and find those images in it, especially those that have impressed it the most according to the nature of the spirit's preoccupations or its inner dispositions. That is how it recalls the impressions of religious, diabolical, dramatic or mundane scenes, as well as bizarre animal-like figures that it had seen sometime before in a painting or had heard about in a story, because these also leave their impressions. Thus, the soul really sees, but it only sees a photographic image in the brain.

In the normal state, these images are fleeting and ephemeral because all sections of the brain are functioning freely. During an illness, however, the brain is weaker and the normal equilibrium in the parts of the brain disappears; only some of the parts remain active while others are more or less paralyzed. This results in the permanence of certain images that are not erased as they would be in the normal state regarding external affairs. This is a true hallucination and the main cause of *idées fixes*.

One can see that we have explained this anomaly with a well known physiological law – that of cerebral impressions – but it is also always necessary to take the soul's intervention into consideration. If the materialists have not yet been able to give a satisfactory solution for the phenomenon, it is because they have not wanted to believe in the soul. Thus, they will say that our explanation is erroneous because it is supported by a contested principle. Contested by whom? By them. However, it has been accepted by the great majority since humankind has existed on the earth. The denial by a few does not comprise a law.

Has our explanation been satisfactory? We have provided it for what it is worth in the absence of some other, and, if you wish, we might call it a simple hypothesis while awaiting something better. As it is, can it explain all the cases involving visions? Certainly not, but we challenge all physiologists to present one that, according to their exclusivist opinions, can explain all of them. However, when they proffer their sacramental words of over-excitation and heightened imagination, they actually pronounce nothing at all. So, if all the theories about hallucination are insufficient for explaining all the facts, it is because there is something more involved than hallucinations per se. Our theory would be incorrect if we applied it to all cases involving visions, however, because some would contradict it; it is correct insofar as it is applied only to certain effects.

CHAPTER VII



Bi-Corporeality and Transfiguration

- Apparitions of Spirits of the Living • Spirit Doubles
 - St. Alfonso of Liguori and St. Anthony of Padua
- Vespasian • Transfiguration • Invisibility

Apparitions of Spirits of the Living

114. Bi-corporeality and transfiguration are two varieties of visual manifestations. As extraordinary as they might seem at first sight, it will be easy to realize through the explanations that may be given for them that they are not outside the order of natural phenomena. Both are based upon the principle that everything that has been stated concerning the properties of the perispirit after death applies to the perispirit of the living as well.

We know that during sleep the spirit partially recovers its freedom; i.e., it isolates itself from the body, and it is in this state that we often have the opportunity to observe it. But the spirit of both the living and the dead always retains its semi-material envelope, which, for the same causes that have already

been referred to, can acquire visibility and tangibility. There have been well proven cases that can leave no doubt on this point. We will cite only a few examples that we know about personally and whose truthfulness we can guarantee. Additionally, everybody can consult their memory and add their own examples.

115. The wife of a friend of ours repeatedly saw entering her bedroom during the night, whether the light was on or off, a woman who sold fruit in the neighborhood, and whom she recognized by sight but with whom she had never spoken. This apparition left her very frightened especially because at the time she knew nothing about Spiritism and because the phenomenon frequently repeated itself. The woman was perfectly alive and was certainly asleep at that time of the night; however, while her physical body was at home, her spirit and fluidic body were in the other woman's house. What was the reason for this? We do not know. In this case, an experienced Spiritist would have asked her what she wanted, but the idea never even occurred to our friend's wife. The apparition always disappeared without the wife knowing how, and always after its disappearance she would make sure that all the doors had been tightly shut and that no one could have possibly entered her room.

This precaution proves that she was wide awake and was not fooled by a dream. On another occasion she saw an unknown man in the same way. However, one day she saw her brother, who was living in California. His appearance was so real at first sight that she thought he had returned and wanted to speak to her, but he disappeared without giving her the opportunity. Later, she received a letter from him that proved he had not died. This woman was what may be called a natural seeing medium, but at that time, as we have already stated, she had never even heard of mediums.

116. Another lady who resides out in the country was seriously ill, and one particular night at around 10:00 she saw an

older gentleman from her city, whom she had sometimes seen at social functions, but with whom she had no closer relationship. He was sitting in an armchair at the foot of her bed, and now and then would take a pinch of snuff. He seemed to be watching over her. Surprised at having a visitor at such an hour, she wanted to ask him why he was there, but the gentleman made a sign for her not to talk, but rather to go back to sleep. She tried several times to speak to him, but each time he repeated his silent recommendation and she would fall back to sleep.

A few days later, after she had recovered from her illness, she received a visit from the same gentleman; however, at a convenient hour and actually in person this time. He was dressed in the same manner with the same snuffbox and displayed the same mannerisms. Certain that he had visited her during her illness, she thanked him for the effort he had made. However, he was quite surprised and said that he had not had the pleasure of seeing her for a long time. The lady was familiar with spirit phenomena, and thus understood what had transpired, but she did not wish to go into explanations and was content with telling him that it had probably just been a dream.

Disbelievers will say that it was in fact a dream – those know-it-alls, who believe themselves to be enlightened individuals. However, it is a fact that this woman had been no more asleep than the other one. Was it a waking dream or, in other words, a hallucination? That is the final catchphrase, the universal explanation for everything that they cannot comprehend. Since we have already sufficiently refuted this objection, we shall proceed on behalf of those who are able to understand us.

117. Here is a more characteristic case and we would be curious to see if it can be explained away as being a simple play of the imagination.

A certain gentleman, who lived out in the country, never wanted to marry despite his family's entreaties. They were

particularly insistent that he meet a young lady from a neighboring city, whom he had never seen. One day while in his bedroom, he was surprised at the presence of a young lady dressed in white with a wreath of flowers around her head. She told him that she was his bride and extended her hand to him, which he took in his own and noticed a ring on it. A few moments later, she vanished. Surprised at this apparition and certain that he had been wide awake, he tried to find out if anyone had come during the day. He was told that no one had visited the house.

A year later, he yielded to the renewed entreaties of a relative and decided to go see the lady who had been recommended to him. He arrived on the day of Corpus Christi. Everybody was returning from the procession and one of the first people he saw upon entering the house was a young lady whom he recognized as the one who had appeared to him earlier. She was dressed in the same clothing because the day of the apparition had also been on Corpus Christi. He was astonished and the girl herself cried out in surprise and fainted. When she recovered, she explained that she had already met this gentleman on the same day a year earlier. They were married. That was in 1835. At the time, no one knew about spirits and, furthermore, both were extremely practical and possessed of less heightened imaginations than most.

One will probably say that both had been preoccupied with the idea of the proposed union and that this state provoked a hallucination; however, one must not forget that the future husband had remained so indifferent in the matter that a whole year passed without his going to see his future bride. Even if we accepted the hallucination hypothesis, we would still have to explain the similarities between the double apparitions: the coincidence of the dress, the Day of Corpus Christi and, finally, the fact that two individuals who had never met physically recognized

each other – circumstances that could not have been produced by the imagination.

118. Before proceeding any further, we must respond at once to a question that inevitably arises: how can the body remain alive while the spirit is absent? We will respond that the body is kept alive by its organic life, which does not depend on the presence of the spirit – like plants, which are alive but have no spirit. We should also add, however, that during life the spirit is never completely detached from the body. Like certain seeing mediums, spirits recognize the spirit of a living individual by a luminous trail that ends at the body, a phenomenon that never occurs if the body is dead, for then the separation is complete. It is by this connection that the spirit is warned, wherever it may be at the time, that it must return to the body, which it does at the speed of light. The result is that the body can never die during the spirit's absence, and that upon returning, the spirit will never find the door shut, as some romanticists have portrayed in their stories meant to entertain people. (See *The Spirits' Book*, nos. 400 ff.)

Spirit Doubles – St. Alfonso of Liguori and St. Anthony of Padua

119. Let us return to our subject. While away from the body, the spirit of a living person can show itself just as the spirit of someone who is deceased can, and with all the appearances of reality. Furthermore, for reasons that we have already explained, it can acquire momentary tangibility. It is this phenomenon, designated by the name *bi-corporeality*, which has given rise to stories involving doubles; i.e., individuals whose simultaneous presence may be confirmed in two different places at the same time. There are two examples of this occurring, not in popular legends, but in ecclesiastical history.

St. Alfonso of Liguori was canonized before the time normally required for having shown himself simultaneously in two different places, which was regarded as a miracle.

While St. Anthony of Padua was preaching on one occasion in Spain, his father, who was in Padua, was being led to his death after having been accused of murder. St. Anthony appeared at that moment, proved his father's innocence and made known the identity of the true criminal, who was later put to death. It was proven that at the time, St. Anthony had not left Spain.

When we evoked St. Alfonso and questioned him about this incident, he provided us with the following answers:

1) *Would you be willing to give us an explanation for this phenomenon?*

"Yes. When humans have completely dematerialized themselves through their virtue and have lifted their soul toward God, they can appear in two places at the same time. Here is how: the incarnate spirit, sensing the approach of sleep, can ask God permission to go somewhere. This spirit (or soul, if you wish) then abandons the body along with a *portion* of its perispirit and leaves the coarse matter behind in a state that resembles death. I say 'resembles death' because the body remains connected to the perispirit, and the soul to matter, by a link that cannot be defined. The perispirit then appears in the desired place. I believe that is everything you will want to know."

2) *But that does not give us an explanation for the visibility and tangibility of the perispirit, does it?*

"Since it is detached from matter, and depending on how highly evolved it is, the spirit can become tangible."

3) *Is the sleep of the body indispensable for the spirit to be able to appear in other places?*

"The soul can split itself whenever it feels attracted to a place different from where the body is. The body does not have to be asleep,

although in that case it is quite rare; however, at such a time it is not in a perfectly normal state. It is always in some degree of ecstasy.”

The soul does not actually split itself in the literal sense of the word. Rather, it radiates in several directions and can thus manifest itself in many places without becoming fragmented, just as light can be reflected in several mirrors at the same time.

4) *If someone were deep in sleep while the spirit was appearing somewhere else, what would happen if he or she were suddenly awakened?*

“That would not happen, because if someone intended to awaken the person, his or her spirit would return to the body in anticipation, given that the spirit would have read the thought.”

An identical explanation has been given to us many times by spirits of both deceased and living individuals. St. Alfonso has explained the double presence phenomenon, but has offered no theory concerning visibility and tangibility.

Vespasian

120. Tacitus reports a similar case:

During the months that Vespasian spent in Alexandria while awaiting the periodic return of the summer winds and the season in which the sea was safest, many wonders occurred that were regarded as heaven displaying its protection and the interest of the gods in the prince.

These wonders increased Vespasian’s desire to visit the sacred dwelling place of the gods in order to consult them regarding the empire. He ordered the temple to be closed to everyone else. He then entered it and was completely attentive to what the oracle was about to proclaim, when he saw standing behind the oracle a highly important Egyptian named Basilides, whom he knew to be ill in a place several days away from Alexandria. Vespasian later

asked the priests if Basilides had come to the temple that day; he asked various pedestrians if they had seen him in the city and he finally sent horsemen who returned to assure him that Basilides had in fact been eighty miles away at the time. Consequently, he no longer had any doubts that the vision was supernatural and the name of Basilides became an oracle to him (Tacitus, *Histories*, bk. IV, chaps. 81 & 82, translated by Burnouf).

121. The person who appears simultaneously in two different places therefore has two bodies, only one of which is real, while the other is merely an appearance. One could say that the former has organic life and the latter has animic life. When the person awakens, the two bodies reunite and the animic life re-enters the physical body. It does not seem possible – at least, we have no examples – but reason seems to demonstrate that when separated, the two bodies cannot simultaneously enjoy the same degree of active and intelligent life. Moreover, concerning what we have just stated, we would emphasize that the real body cannot die while the apparent body remains visible: the approach of death would always call the spirit back to the body even if for only a moment. This also means that the apparent body could not be killed, since it is neither organic nor composed of flesh and bone – it would vanish the second that anyone wanted to kill it.²³

Transfiguration

122. We shall now consider the second phenomenon, *transfiguration*, which entails a modification of the appearance of a living body. Regarding it, here is a case that occurred between

²³ See *Revue Spirite*, Jan. 1859, *Le Follet de Bayonne*; Feb. 1859, *Les Agénères*; *Mon ami Hermann*; May 1859, *Le Lien entre l'Ésprit et le corps*; November 1859, *L'âme errante*; Jan. 1860, *L'Esprit d'un côté et le corps de l'autre*; Mar. 1860, *Études sur L'Esprit de personnes vivantes: le docteur V. et mademoiselle I.*; Apr. 1860, *Le Fabricant de Saint Pétersbourg*; *Apparitions tangibles*; Nov. 1860, *Histoire de Marie d'Agréda*; July 1861, *Une apparition providentielle*. – Auth.

1858 and 1859 on the outskirts of Saint-Etienne, and whose perfect authenticity we can guarantee.

A young lady of about fifteen possessed the strange faculty of being able to transfigure herself, in that at any given moment she could take on the appearances of certain deceased individuals. This illusion was so complete as to lead one to believe that one was actually in the person's presence due to the similarity of the facial traits, expressions, voice tone and even the specific speech patterns. This phenomenon repeated itself hundreds of times without any interference from the girl's will. She often took on the appearance of her brother, who had died a few years earlier, reproducing not only his facial features but also his girth and height.

A local doctor who was often present during these strange occurrences wanted to assure himself that he was not the victim of an illusion, so he performed the following experiment (we gathered the information from the doctor himself, the girl's father and many other trustworthy and honorable eye witnesses). The doctor decided to weigh the girl in her normal state, and then during a transfiguration in which she took on the appearance of her brother, who had died at age twenty and who had been much larger and stronger than she. The doctor subsequently verified that during transfiguration *the girl's weight nearly doubled*.

The experiment was conclusive since it was impossible to attribute the appearance to a simple optical illusion. We will try to explain this type of occurrence, which has always been regarded as a miracle, but which we simply label as a phenomenon.

123. In certain cases, transfiguration can occur as the result of a simple muscular contraction that can cause a very different facial expression to such a degree that the person becomes unrecognizable. We have often observed this in a few somnambulists; however, in this case transformation is not radical.

A woman may appear to be young or old, beautiful or homely, but she will always be the same woman and her weight will neither increase nor decrease. However, in the case of the young lady, there was obviously something more involved. The theory of the perispirit will send us in the right direction.

We accept in principle that the spirit can give its perispirit any appearance it chooses, and by modifying its molecular arrangement it can render it visible and tangible, and, consequently, *opaque*; that while separated from the body, the perispirit of a living individual can undergo the same transformations, and that this change of state occurs through a combining of fluids.

Next, let us imagine the perispirit of a living person, not *separated from* the body, but, instead, *radiating all around* the body in such a way as to envelop it like a kind of vapor. In this state it can undergo the same modifications as when it is away. If it loses its transparency, the body can seem to disappear, to become invisible and veiled as if it had been immersed in some kind of fog. It can even change its appearance and become luminous, depending on the will or power of the spirit. If another spirit were to combine its own fluids with those of the former, it could substitute itself for the person's appearance in such a way that his or her real body disappears, covered by an exterior fluidic envelope, whose appearance can vary as the spirit wills. This appears to be the true cause of this strange phenomenon, and we must state that transfiguration is quite rare. The difference in weight can be explained in the same way as the change in inert objects; that is, the intrinsic weight of the body itself does not vary, since the amount of its matter does not increase; instead, the body is influenced by an outside agent that can increase or decrease its relative weight (as we explain in nos. 78 ff. above).

Therefore, the transfiguration into the form of a child would probably decrease the weight proportionally.

Invisibility

124. We can understand that the body can take on a larger appearance than its own, or an equal one, but how can it assume the smaller appearance of a child, as we have just proposed? In such a case, wouldn't the real body supersede the limits of the apparent one? That is why we have not said that such an occurrence has ever been actually produced. By referring to the theory of specific weight, we simply wanted to show that the apparent weight might also decrease.

As for the phenomenon per se, we will neither affirm nor deny its possibility. However, if it is indeed possible, the fact that we cannot explain it satisfactorily does not invalidate it. We must not forget that we are still at the beginning of this science and that it is still far from having said the final word concerning this point as well as many others. Besides, the parts of the body that would exceed the limits of the smaller one could perfectly well be rendered invisible.

The invisibility theory naturally highlights the preceding explanations and those that refer to the apportionment phenomenon. (See nos. 96 ff)

125. We might have added a brief discussion of the strange phenomenon of *agénères*²⁴, which, as extraordinary as it might appear at first glance, is no more supernatural than any of the others. But since we have already explained it in *Revue Spirite* of February 1859, we believe it would not be worthwhile to go into detail at this time. We would simply state that it is a variety

²⁴ From the Greek: a, deprived of, and *géine, géinomi*, to engender; that which is not engendered – Auth.

of tangible apparition and a state of certain spirits who can momentarily assume the forms of living persons so as to produce a perfect illusion.

CHAPTER VIII



The Laboratory of the Invisible World

• Spirit Clothing; The Spontaneous Formation of
Tangible Objects • The Modification of the Properties
of Matter • Curative Magnetic Action

Spirit Clothing; The Spontaneous Formation of Tangible Objects

126. We have stated that spirits often appear dressed in tunics, enveloped in flowing drapery or in ordinary clothes. Flowing drapery seems to be what is generally worn in the spirit world. However, we might ask where they find clothes that are similar in every way to those worn in life, along with all the added accouterments. They obviously did not take these objects with them, since such objects remain behind with us. So where do they obtain the clothing they wear in that other world?

This is a highly intriguing question, but for many it is no more than mere curiosity. Nevertheless, it raised a very important

issue, whose solution led us to discover a general law that may be equally applied to our own corporeal world. Numerous facts have complicated the subject and have exposed the insufficiency of suggested theories.

Up to a certain point, the existence of clothing *per se* would be acceptable because we could regard it as being in some way part of the individual; however, the same cannot be said regarding accouterments, such as the snuffbox of the man who visited the ill lady discussed in no. 116 above. We should note that in that particular case we were not dealing with a deceased person but a living one, and that when the visitor returned in person, he had an identical snuffbox. Then where did his spirit find the one used at the foot of the ailing woman's bed? We could cite numerous cases in which the spirits of both deceased and living individuals appeared with various objects such as sticks, weapons, tobacco pipes, lanterns, books, etc.

We then had an idea: inert objects might have ethereal correspondents in the invisible world, and the condensed matter that forms various objects might contain a quintessential component that our senses cannot detect. Although this theory was not devoid of probability, it could not explain all the facts. There was one in particular that appeared to frustrate all interpretations. Until then, we had only dealt with images or appearances, and we had already seen that the perispirit can assume the properties of matter and render itself tangible. But this tangibility is temporary, and solid objects can vanish like shadows. Such a phenomenon is in and of itself quite extraordinary, but what is even more impressive is the production of matter that remains solidified, which has been demonstrated by numerous authenticated occurrences, notably those involving direct writing, which we shall return to in more detail in a special chapter. However, since these phenomena are intimately connected to our present subject and represent one of

its more positive manifestations, we shall anticipate the order by making a few preliminary remarks at this time.

127. Direct writing or *pneumatography* is writing that is produced spontaneously without the medium using his or her hand or a pencil. All that is needed is a clean sheet of paper, which can be prepared taking all necessary precautions in order to prevent any kind of fraud. The paper is folded and placed somewhere – in a drawer or simply on a piece of furniture. Under the proper conditions, within a certain amount of time letters or various marks, words, sentences and even entire communications will appear on the paper, usually in some dark substance resembling graphite but sometimes as though written with a red pencil, ordinary ink or even printer's ink.

Such is the phenomenon in its simplest form, and whose reproduction, although not very common, is not that rare either, for there are mediums that can induce it very easily. When a pencil is placed together with the paper, one might believe that the spirit has utilized it to write with, but when only the paper is provided it is obvious that the writing has been produced by matter put there by the spirit itself. Where did the spirit obtain it? We were led to the solution of this question by the snuffbox example mentioned earlier.

128. St. Louis gave us the solution with the following responses:

1) *We have cited a case involving the apparition of a living person's spirit, who carried a snuffbox and took pinches from it now and then. Did it feel the same sensations that we would feel in such a case?*

“No.”

2) *The snuffbox had the same shape as the one the man habitually used at home. What was the snuffbox that the spirit was using?*

“An appearance. It was made to look like the real object in order to be noticed and so that the apparition would not be taken

to be only a hallucination caused by the seer's state of health. The spirit wanted the lady to believe he was really present, and so he took on all the appearances of reality."

3) *You have said it was an appearance, but an appearance is not actually real; it is like an optical illusion. We would like to know if the snuffbox was an unreal image or if there was something material about it.*

"Of course there was. It is with the help of this material principle that a perispirit can appear dressed in clothes similar to those that it wore while alive."

Obviously, we must understand the word *appearance* to mean *aspect, imitation*. The spirit was not carrying the real snuffbox; it was only a representation of it. Hence, it was an appearance when compared with the original, although composed of a material substance.

Experience has taught us that we must not always take the expressions used by spirits as being literal. If we interpret them according to our own ideas, we expose ourselves to big mistakes. That is why we must get to the bottom of the meaning of their words whenever they present the least ambiguity. The Spirits themselves constantly make this very recommendation. Without the above explanation, the word *appearance*, which is always used in similar cases, could be wrongly interpreted.

4) *Could inert matter be reproduced? Could the invisible world contain an essential matter that assumes the forms of the objects we see in this world? In other words, could the objects in this world have their etheric double in the invisible world in the same way that humans are represented there by spirits?*

"Such is not the case. A spirit exerts a power over the material elements scattered throughout the space of your atmosphere, a power that you are far from having any inkling about. A spirit can concentrate these elements by using its will and give them the appearance that matches its intentions."

One may notice that this question was the translation of our thought involving the idea that we had already formed concerning the nature of spirit-produced objects. If the answer had been a reflection of our own thought, as some have suggested, we would have received the confirmation of our theory instead of a contrary one.

5) *I would once more categorically state the question in order to avoid any misunderstanding: are the clothes worn by spirits something real?*

“It seems to me that the preceding answer has resolved the question. Don’t you already understand that the perispirit is something real?”

6) *Your explanation indicates that spirits submit ethereal matter to the transformations they desire; thus, for example, in the case of the snuffbox the spirit did not find it already made, but it itself produced it when needed by an act of its will, and then un-made it in the same way. Is this the same procedure for all other objects such as clothing, jewelry, etc.?*

“But that is obvious.”

7) *The snuffbox was made so visible to the lady that it produced the illusion of a real object. Could the spirit have also made it tangible to her?*

“It could have.”

8) *If so, could she have held it, believing it to be a real snuffbox?*

“Yes.”

9) *If she had opened it, would she have found snuff? If she had inhaled some, might it have made her sneeze?*

“Yes.”

The Modification of the Properties of Matter

10) *Then, a spirit doesn’t merely form an object, but can endow it with its own particular properties?*

“If it wants to. It was due to that principle that I responded in the affirmative to the previous questions. You will receive proofs

of the powerful actions that a spirit exerts over matter, and which you are far from imagining – as I have already stated.”

11) *Let us suppose that a spirit wanted to make a noxious substance, which a person then swallowed. Would he or she be poisoned?*

“A spirit could do that, but wouldn’t because it would not be allowed to.”

12) *Could a spirit produce a wholesome substance that could cure an illness, and has such a thing ever happened?*

“Yes, many times.”

13) *In the same way, could it make a nutritious substance? Let us suppose that it made a piece of fruit or something; could someone eat it and feel satiated?*

“Yes, yes; however, do not try so hard to figure out what is so very easy to comprehend. It only takes a ray of sunlight to enable your coarse organs to perceive the physical particles filling the air in the midst of which you live. Don’t you realize that air contains water vapor? Condense it out and it will return to the liquid state. Deprive those impalpable and invisible water molecules of heat and you will see them transformed into a very solid object. Thus, chemists will form many other substances into other extraordinary, even more astonishing substances. Spirits simply possess instruments more perfect than yours: the will and permission of God.”

The above question on satiety is very important in this matter. How can a substance whose existence and properties are merely temporary and somehow conventional produce satiety? When it reaches the stomach, the substance produces the *feeling* of satiety, but not the satiety that would normally result from fullness. If such a substance can act on the organic economy and modify a morbid state, it can also act upon the stomach and cause a feeling of satiety. But we would ask pharmacists and restaurant owners not to be jealous or think that spirits have arrived to compete with them. These cases are rare and exceptional, and never

depend on some individual's own will; otherwise, everyone would be fed and healed too cheaply.

14) *Can the objects that have been rendered tangible by a spirit's will remain in such a state and be used?*

"That could happen, but *it is never done*, for it is outside ordinary laws."

15) *Do all spirits possess the same degree of power for producing tangible objects?*

"It is obvious that the more evolved a spirit is the more easily it does so, but it also depends on the circumstances; less evolved spirits can possess such power."

16) *Is a spirit always aware of the way in which it produces its clothes or the objects it renders visible?*

"No. It is often aided in their formation by an instinctive action, which it itself does not comprehend if it is not sufficiently enlightened."

17) *If a spirit can draw from the universal element the matter for such objects and give them a temporary reality with their own particular properties, can it also draw the matter needed to write with, which would give us the key to the phenomenon of direct writing?*

"Finally, you have arrived at the correct point!"

In fact, this is exactly where we wanted to arrive at with all the previous questions, which proves that this Spirit had read our thoughts.

18) *If the matter used by a spirit has no permanence, why don't letters produced by direct writing disappear?*

"Don't draw conclusions from words. To start with, I did not use the word *never*, because I was referring to a voluminous material object. In the case of direct writings, however, these are signs that are useful to preserve – and so they are. What I meant to say was that the objects thus composed by a spirit cannot be made

useful, since in reality they cannot possess the same aggregation of matter as your solid objects.”

129. The above explanation may be summarized as follows: the spirit acts upon matter; it draws from the universal cosmic matter, as it pleases, the elements required to form objects with the appearance of various objects of the earth. It can also act through its will upon the elementary matter to cause an inner transformation that gives it certain properties. This faculty is inherent to the nature of the spirit, who often employs it instinctively when necessary and, therefore, without realizing it. The objects thus formed by the spirit are temporary, depending on its will or need – it can make them or un-make them at its own pleasure. The objects can, in certain cases, appear perfectly real to living persons, becoming momentarily visible and even tangible. This procedure must be regarded as one of formation and not creation, since the spirit cannot produce something out of nothing.

130. The existence of a unique elementary matter is today almost universally accepted by science and confirmed by the Spirits, as we have just seen. This matter gives origin to all the bodies of nature, and by the transformations it undergoes, it also produces their various properties. That is how a healthful substance can be made noxious by a simple modification. Chemistry itself has provided numerous such examples.

Everyone knows that two harmless substances can be combined in certain portions to result in something harmful. One part oxygen and two parts hydrogen, both harmless by themselves, form water, but by adding only one more atom of oxygen we have a corrosive liquid. Even without altering the proportions it is often that a simple modification in the form of the molecular aggregation is enough to change the properties, which is how an opaque object can become transparent *and vice-versa*.

Since a spirit can act so decisively upon the elementary matter by merely exerting its will, we can understand that not only can it form various substances but it can even denature their properties by using its own will as a reactive agent.

Curative Magnetic Action

131. This theory provides us with the solution to a problem in magnetism that has been well known but inexplicable until now – the phenomenon of the modification of the properties of water by willpower. The acting agent is the magnetizer's spirit, who, in most cases, is assisted by a discarnate spirit. It causes a transmutation by means of the magnetic fluid, which, as we have already stated, is the substance most nearly like cosmic matter or the universal element. And if it can thereby cause a modification in the properties of water, it can just as easily cause a modification in the organic fluids, which will result in the healing effect of the magnetic action when properly directed.

We know the crucial role played by the will in all magnetic phenomena, but how may we explain the material action of such a subtle agent? The will per se is not an entity, a substance or even a property of highly etherealized matter; rather, it is the essential attribute of the spirit; i.e., of the thinking being. With the aid of this lever, the spirit acts upon the elementary matter, and by a consequent action it reacts upon its components, whose inner properties can thus be transformed.

The will is an attribute of both the incarnate and the errant spirit, and hence the power of the magnetizer, which we know results from the force of his or her will. The incarnate spirit can act upon the elementary matter and thereby modify the properties of things within certain limits. This explains the ability to heal by contact and the laying-on of hands, a faculty which some

Chapter VIII

individuals possess to a high or low degree. (See the chapter on *Mediums*, the paragraph referring to *healing mediums*. Also see *Revue Spirite*, Jul. 1859, pp. 184 and 189; *Le Zouave de Magenta: Un officier de l'armée d'Italie*).

CHAPTER IX



Haunted Places

132. The spontaneous manifestations, which have occurred down through time, and the persistence of certain spirits in making their presence ostensibly felt in certain places, have given origin to the belief in haunted places. The following responses were given to questions about them:

1) *Do spirits attach themselves to individuals only or to things also?*

“It depends on how evolved they are. Certain spirits may attach themselves to earthly objects. For example, misers who have hidden their money and who are not sufficiently dematerialized may continue to watch over it and guard it.”

2) *Do errant spirits show a predilection for certain places?*

“It is the same principle. Spirits who are not attached to earth prefer places where they can practice loving deeds; these spirits are more attracted to people than to material objects. Nevertheless, there are those who might prefer certain places for a while, but they are always less evolved spirits.”

3) *Since a spirit's attachment to a place is a sign of impurity, does it also mean that it is evil?*

“Of course not. A spirit can be little-advanced without being evil. Doesn't the same occur among individuals?”

4) *Is there any factual basis for the belief that spirits prefer to frequent ruins?*

“No. Spirits go to those places as well as anywhere else, but people’s imaginations are impressed by the lugubrious aspect of certain places and attribute to their presence what is only, in most cases, a very natural effect. How often does fear turn a tree’s shadow into a ghost, the growl of an animal or the whistling of the wind into a spirit? Spirits enjoy the human presence and that is why they prefer inhabited places to abandoned ones.”

– *Nonetheless, by what we know about the diversity of temperaments among spirits, there must be misanthropes who may prefer solitude.*

“That is why I did not give you a definite answer to your question. I stated that they can go to abandoned places as well as anywhere else, so it is obvious that those who avoid human contact do so because it suits them. This does not mean, however, that ruins are necessarily preferred by spirits, since it is certain that they are more often found in cities and in palaces than deep in the woods.”

5) *Popular beliefs are usually based on truth. What is the origin of the belief in haunted places?*

“The basis of truth in this case is indeed the manifestation of spirits, which humans have instinctively believed in throughout time, but as I said, the notion of lugubrious places strikes the imagination and naturally fills it with beings regarded as supernatural. This superstitious belief is re-enforced by the works of poets and children’s tales.”

6) *Do spirits who gather together prefer certain days and hours?*

“No. Days and hours are used by humans to control time during their material life, but spirits do not have that need and do not care about it.”

7) *What is the origin of the idea that spirits prefer to appear at nighttime?*

“The impression made on people’s imaginations by darkness and silence. All such beliefs are superstitions that the rational knowledge of Spiritism must abolish. The same applies to the belief in propitious days and hours. You must realize that the influence of midnight has never existed except in fables.”

– *If that is so, then why do certain spirits announce that they will arrive and manifest themselves at midnight and on particular days, such as Friday, for example?*

“They are spirits who take advantage of human credulity for the fun of it. It is the same reason that some say they are the Devil or give themselves other devilish names. Show them that you are not that stupid and they will not return.”

8) *Do spirits have any preference for visiting the graves in which their bodies lie?*

“The body was no more than a garment. They have no more preference for the envelope in which they had to suffer than a prisoner for his chains. Being remembered by persons dear to them is the only thing they value.”

– *Are prayers that are offered over their graves more pleasing to them and do they attract them more than prayers offered elsewhere?*

“As you know, prayer is an evocation that attracts spirits. The more fervent and sincere a prayer is, the more effect it will have. Thus, beside the grave of some venerated person people concentrate harder, and the preservation of pious relics is a witness to the affection given to the spirit and to which it is always sensitive. It is always the thought that acts upon a spirit – not material objects. Such objects have more influence upon the one who prays by fixing the attention upon them rather than upon the spirit.”

9) *Then the belief in haunted places would not appear to be completely erroneous, correct?*

“We have stated that certain spirits may be attracted to material things and can therefore be attracted to certain places in

which they appear to take up residence until the circumstances that have drawn them there no longer exist.”

– *What circumstances could so draw them?*

“Their affinity for some of the people who frequent such places or the desire to communicate with them; however, their intentions are not always so praiseworthy. When evil spirits are involved, they may seek revenge against certain individuals with whom they have some complaint. Having to remain in a determined place may also be for some a punishment that has been imposed, especially if they have committed a crime there, of which they will constantly be reminded.”²⁵

10) *Are such places always haunted by their former residents?*

“Sometimes, but not always. If the former resident was an advanced spirit, it would have no more connection to its former abode than to its body. The spirits who haunt certain places nearly always do so out of caprice, at least those who may be attracted out of sympathy for certain persons.”

– *Might they affix themselves to a place in order to protect a person or family?*

“Assuredly, if they are good spirits. But in that case they never make their presence known disagreeably.”

11) *Is there any truth to the story of the White Lady?*

“It is a fable derived from a thousand real incidents.”

12) *Is it rational to be afraid of places that are haunted by spirits?*

“No. The spirits who haunt certain places and make disturbances are mostly trying to entertain themselves at the expense of the gullible and cowardly, rather than doing evil. Remember that spirits are everywhere and that wherever you are there are spirits right beside you – even in the most peaceful houses. They only seem to haunt certain residences because they find the opportunity to manifest their presence in them.

²⁵ See *Revue Spirite*, Feb. 1860: *Histoire d'un damné* – Auth.

13) *Is there a way to get rid of them?*

“Yes, but nearly always what is done only serves to attract them instead. The best way to expel evil spirits is to attract good ones. Therefore, attract good spirits by doing as much good as possible. Then, the evil ones will flee, since good and evil are incompatible. Always be good and you will only have good spirits at your side.”

– *But there are very good individuals who are nonetheless confronted with petty annoyances by evil spirits.*

“If they are really good, it could be a test to exercise their patience and incite them to be better still. But don’t believe that all those who always speak of virtue actually possess it themselves. Those who possess true moral qualities are nearly always unaware of them or do not talk about them.”

14) *Is exorcism an effective means of expelling evil spirits from haunted places?*

“Have you ever seen an effective exorcism? No, you haven’t; on the contrary, haven’t the troubles doubled after exorcism rites? That is because such spirits love being taken for the Devil. Spirits who have no evil intentions can also manifest their presence by making noises or even by making themselves visible, but they never do so to cause trouble. They are quite often suffering spirits, for whom you can provide relief by praying for them. At other times, they are benevolent spirits, who wish to show that they are with you, or, finally, they may be frivolous spirits who are entertaining themselves. Since those who disturb the peace with noises are nearly always spirits who are amusing themselves, it is best simply to laugh at their antics. They will depart when they see that they can neither frighten nor vex you.” (See chap. V: *Spontaneous Physical Manifestations*).

The result of the above explanations is that there are spirits who attach themselves to certain places and prefer to remain there,

but they do not have to manifest their presence by perceivable effects. Any place at all may be the obligatory or preferred dwelling of a spirit, even if it is an evil one, without ever having produced any kind of manifestation.

Spirits who connect themselves to places or material things are never highly evolved, but just because they are not evolved it does not mean they are evil or fed by evil intentions. At times, they are even companions who are more useful than harmful, for if they take an interest in certain persons, they may protect them.

CHAPTER X



The Nature of Communications

- Crude Communications • Frivolous Communications •
- Serious Communications • Instructive Communications

133. We have stated that every effect revealing the act of a free will as its cause, and no matter how insignificant it may be, proves that such a cause is in fact an intelligent one. Thus, the simple movement of a table which has responded to our thought, or which displays an intentional character, may be regarded as an intelligent manifestation. If table-moving were all that happened, we would not be nearly as interested in the matter. However, we have received proof that there is more than simple physical action in these phenomena. Any practical usefulness that we could derive from them would be zero or at least very limited; however, everything changes when this intelligence reaches a point where a regular and continuous exchange of ideas may ensue. At such point, they can no longer be treated as simple intelligent manifestations but as true *communications*. The means at our disposal nowadays that enable us to receive them are as extensive, explicit and rapid as those we have with one another.

If we have fully understood the infinite variety of spirits as to their intelligence and morality according to the *Spirit Hierarchy* (*The Spirits' Book*, no. 100), we will easily comprehend the differences in their communications. Their communications must necessarily reflect the nobility or baseness of their ideas, their wisdom or ignorance, and their vices or virtues. In other words, their communications no more resemble one another than the communications of people of illiterate and more educated cultures among humans. The different types of communications can be classified into four main categories. According to their predominant characteristics they may be *crude*, *frivolous*, *serious* or *instructive*.

Crude Communications

134. *Crude communications* are those containing expressions that shock decorum. They can only come from spirits of the lowest orders, who are still soiled by all the impurities of matter, and there is nothing different about them than the expressions used by depraved and crude human beings. Any person with a minimum amount of sensitivity is repulsed by them, for they are trivial, ignoble, obscene, insolent, arrogant, malevolent and even impious, depending on the character of the spirit.

Frivolous Communications

135. *Frivolous communications* are those from frivolous, mocking or mischievous spirits, who are more cunning than downright evil and who give no importance to anything they say. Since these communications have nothing improper about them, they please certain individuals who find them entertaining and who find satisfaction in useless conversations in which much is

talked about but nothing is actually said. These spirits sometimes let loose with witty and biting tirades, often mixing banal jokes with hard truths that nearly always hit with great accuracy. Frivolous spirits are the ones who swarm around us and use every opportunity to meddle in our spirit communications. Truth concerns them very little, and thus they feel a malicious pleasure in befuddling those who are weak and predisposed enough to believe their words. People who like this sort of communication naturally open themselves up to frivolous and deceiving spirits. Serious spirits stay away from them, as among us serious men and women stay away from groups of irresponsible people.

Serious Communications

136. *Serious communications* are serious both as to subject and form. Every communication which does not display any frivolousness or crudeness, and which has a useful purpose, even though perhaps of private interest only, is naturally serious. However, that does not mean that such communications are always without error, since serious spirits are not all equally enlightened. They are ignorant of many things and they may be mistaken about them, though in good faith. That is why truly high order spirits constantly recommend that we submit all communications to the control of reason and the strictest logic.

Hence, we must distinguish between communications that are truly *serious* and those that are *erroneously* serious, which is not always easy, for due to the seriousness of their language, certain presumptuous or pseudo-scholar spirits may attempt to impose the most wrong-headed ideas and the most absurd theories. In addition, to render them more acceptable and lend them more importance, they have no scruples about adorning themselves with the most respectable and even the most venerated names.

This is one of the biggest obstacles faced by practical Spiritism. We shall return to deal with this subject further on, giving it the development required by its importance, and at the same time we shall shed light on the means of avoiding the danger of erroneous communications.

Instructive Communications

137. *Instructive communications* are serious communications whose main purpose is to provide teaching given by spirits about the sciences, morality, philosophy, etc. Their greater or lesser profoundness depends on the particular spirit's degree of advancement and *dematerialization*. In order to take full advantage of such communications, they must be regular and followed with perseverance. Serious spirits connect themselves to those who desire to be taught and they assist them, whereas they leave frivolous spirits the job of entertaining those who only see communications as being a type of temporary distraction.

It is only through the regularity and frequency of these communications that we can appraise the moral and intellectual value of the spirits who are communicating with us, as well as the degree of trust they deserve. If we require experience in order to judge other people, we need it even more to judge spirits.

If we deem such communications to be *instructive*, we therefore suppose them to be *true*, for something that is not *true* cannot be *instructive* even if transmitted in the most striking language. Thus, in this category we cannot include teachings that often display a striking and pompous style, since they come from spirits who are more pretentious than wise and who wish to deceive us. However, such spirits cannot disguise their shallowness or keep up their charade for very long. They soon expose their weak side by showing little continuity in their communications, or by our challenging of their statements.

138. The means of communication vary widely. By acting upon our physical organs and senses, spirits can express themselves through sight – apparitions; touch – concealed or visible tangible impressions; hearing – noises; smell – odors whose cause is unknown. Although it is very real, this last means of manifestation is undoubtedly the least dependable due to the numerous causes that can lead to error, and thus we will not take any time for it at present. What we must carefully examine are the diverse means of receiving communications; i.e., *a regular and continuous exchange of ideas*. The means for doing so are *raps, speech and writing*. We shall pursue our study of them in special chapters.



Sematology and Typtology

- The Language of Signals and Raps; Alphabetical Typtology

139. The earliest intelligent manifestations were expressed by means of raps or typtology. This primitive method, restricted by the initial conditions of the process, offered only very little usefulness. Consequently, communications received in this manner were at first limited to monosyllabic yes/no responses through a predetermined number of raps. As we have stated, however, the method was later improved upon. Raps are produced by two procedures through special mediums, and in order for this method to work an aptitude for physical manifestations is usually required. The first procedure, which may be called *seesaw typtology*, consists in the movement of a table which rises to one side and then drops to strike with the formerly upraised leg. All that is required of the mediums in this case is for them to rest their hands on the edge of the table. If they want to converse with a particular spirit, an evocation is required; if not, the first spirit to arrive or the one who habitually comes manifests itself. For example, having agreed that one strike means *yes* and two means *no* (the number does not matter), questions are then asked of the spirit (later, we will see

which questions we should refrain from asking). The problem is the briefness of the answers and the difficulty in formulating the question so that the answer can be either yes or no. Suppose we want to ask the spirit, "What do you want?" It can only respond with one word. So we would have to ask, "Do you want this?" "No." That?" "Yes." And so on.

140. It is interesting to note that in employing this method, the spirit normally adds a sort of *mimicry*; i.e., it expresses how emphatic the affirmation or negation is through the force of the strikes. It may also express the nature of the sentiments that prompt it: violence by rough movements, or anger and impatience by strong repeated raps – like someone tamping his or her foot with anger – to the point of even smashing the table leg to the floor. However, if it is a kind and gentle spirit, at the end of the session it will incline the table as if waving goodbye. If the spirit wants to address one of the participants directly, it will raise the table toward him or her either smoothly or violently, depending on whether it wants to display affection or hostility. Properly speaking, this is *semiotics* or sign language, as *typtology* is the language of raps. Here is a notable example of the spontaneous use of semiotics: we knew of a gentleman who was in his living room one day, where several persons were involved in spirit manifestations, when he received one of our letters. While he was reading it, the small table that was being used for the experiments suddenly moved toward him. When he had finished reading the letter, he went to place it on a table at the other end of the room. The small table followed him and directed itself toward where he had deposited the letter. Surprised at the coincidence, he thought there might be some relation between the movement and the letter, so he asked the spirit, who responded that it was one of our [Kardec's] familiar spirits. When the gentleman informed us of what had happened, we asked the spirit about its reason for the visit that it had made.

It responded, "It is natural that I visit the persons with whom you maintain relations so that I can provide you and them both, if necessary, any needed advice."

It is obvious that the spirit wanted to call the man's attention to the fact that it was there and it had sought an opportunity to do so. A mute person could not have done any better.

141. It did not take long for typtology to be improved upon and to be enriched with a more complete form of communication, i.e., alphabetical typtology, which consists in the indication of letters by means of raps. It was then possible to receive words, sentences and even entire discourses. Depending on the method employed, the table strikes as many raps as necessary to indicate each letter, that is, one strike for *a*, two for *b* and so on while someone records the letters indicated. The spirit indicates when the process is finished by means of a predetermined signal.

It is easy to see that this procedure is very slow and requires quite some time for the longest communications. Nevertheless, there were persons who were patient enough to use it in order to obtain several pages. This practice, however, led to the discovery of shortcuts that allowed the work to proceed faster. The one most commonly employed consists in having in front of the mediums the alphabet and a series of numbers indicating units. While one medium is at the table, another points to the letters if they want to obtain words, or to the numbers if they want a number. When the second person reaches the letter needed, the table strikes a rap and the experimenter writes the letter. This procedure is repeated for the second, third and following letters. If there is a mistake, the spirit warns the mediums by making the table strike or move and they then start over. This procedure becomes quite rapid with practice. By guessing the word which has just started to form, according to the context, the communication procedure can be shortened. If there is any doubt, the spirit is consulted, who then responds by yes or no.

142. All these effects may be obtained even more simply through raps occurring within the wood of the table itself without any movement at all (in conformance with what we reported in the chapter on physical manifestations – no. 64); this is known as *internal typtology*. Not all mediums are equally skilled at this latter form of communication and some can only receive tilting table raps. However, with practice most can manage it and this method has the double advantage of being faster, lending itself less to someone suspecting that the tilting can be attributed to voluntary pressure applied by the medium. It is true that internal raps can also be imitated by deceitful mediums – the best things are subject to imitation – but this proves nothing against their reality. (See the chapter toward the end of this volume entitled *Fraud and Trickery*)

Whatever improvements may be introduced into this method, it can never attain the speed and ease that writing presents, which is why it is little used nowadays. Nonetheless, it is sometimes of interest because of its phenomenological aspect, particularly for newcomers, since it has the special advantage of peremptorily proving absolute independence from the medium's own thoughts. With this method we often receive responses that are so unexpected and surprising that one would have to be very prejudiced indeed to deny the evidence. Thus, it has been a powerful motive of conviction for many individuals. However, when this method is employed – even more than when others are employed – spirits do not like to be submitted to the caprice of the curious who want to put them to the test with questions off the subject.

143. In order to better safeguard the independence of communications from the medium's own thoughts, several instruments have been invented, such as dial plates on which letters like those used in electric telegraphs have been engraved. A needle, which moves under the medium's influence and with the help of a conducting wire and pulley, indicates the letters.

We have only become familiar with such instruments through designs and descriptions published in America; thus, we cannot determine their true worth but it seems that their complexity would be quite inconvenient. We believe that independence from the medium is perfectly proven by internal raps – even more so by the unexpectedness of the answers – than by all other material means. Moreover, disbelievers, who are always predisposed to seeing pieces of string and set-ups, will be even more inclined to distrust some sort of special mechanism than a plain table devoid of any kind of accouterments.

144. A simpler device, but one that bad faith can easily abuse (as we will see in the chapter on fraud) is what we will designate by the name *Girardin Table*, in memory of the use made of it by Madame Emile de Girardin during the many communications she received as a medium. Although she was very bright, Madame Girardin had the weakness of believing in spirits and their manifestations! The device consists of a small round table top about 18 inches in diameter that can turn freely and easily around an axle like a wheel. Letters, numbers and the words *yes* and *no* are engraved on its surface around the edge, and in the center is a fixed pointer. The medium puts his or her fingers on the edge of the top, which spins until it stops with the desired letter in line with the pointer. The letters are written down, quickly forming words and sentences.

One should note that the round table top does not slide around under the medium's fingers; instead, they remain fixed in one place on the edge and follow the movement. A powerful medium could possibly manage to produce an independent movement. We believe that it is possible but we have never witnessed it. If the experiment could be performed in this way, it would be more conclusive because it would be less open to fraud.

145. We must correct a widespread error that consists in confusing all spirits who communicate through raps with those who are specifically known as ‘rapping spirits’. Typtology is a means of communication like any other and is just as worthy of being used by high order spirits as is writing and speech. All spirits, whether good or evil, can use it as well as the other means. What characterizes highly evolved spirits is the loftiness of their thought and not the instrument that they use to transmit it. They undoubtedly prefer the most convenient and rapid means, but when there is no pencil or paper available, they have no qualms about using a plain talking table. This is demonstrated by the fact that we have received communications in this way that are most sublime. If we no longer use the table, it is not because we despise it, but rather because as a phenomenon it has already taught us everything we needed to know and can no longer add to our convictions. Additionally, the length of the communications that we now receive requires a speed that is incompatible with typtology.

Hence, all the spirits that communicate through raps are not rapping spirits – a designation that should be reserved for those whom we may call ‘professional’ rappers, who use this means either to entertain people, or else to vex others with their troublemaking, sometimes with witty exchanges, but never profound ones. It would therefore be a waste of time to ask them any questions of a certain scientific or philosophical interest. Because of their ignorance and inferiority, other spirits have justifiably characterized them as the jesters and clowns of the spirit world. Nonetheless, we must add that they do not always act on their own count but often serve as the instruments of highly evolved spirits who may want to produce material effects.



Pneumatography or Direct Writing Pneumatophony

Direct Writing

146. *Pneumatography* is writing produced directly by a spirit without any intermediary. It differs from *psychography*, which is the transmission of a spirit's thought in writing through the hand of a medium.

The direct writing phenomenon is unarguably one of the most extraordinary in Spiritism, but as strange as it may at first appear to be, today it is a proven and incontestable fact. If a theory is needed in order to comprehend the possibility of Spiritist phenomena in general, this case especially requires one since it is one of the most startling presented so far. Nonetheless, it ceases to seem supernatural when the principle underlying it is understood.

When this phenomenon first appeared, the dominant feeling about it was one of distrust. Fraud was quickly suspected because everyone in fact knows about so-called invisible inks, whose marks are invisible at first but become visible sometime after the writing. Hence, it seemed like it was a possible abuse of people's credulity,

and we cannot say that such has never occurred. We are even convinced that whether out of a mercenary interest or plain vanity, or to elicit belief in their powers, some individuals have employed such subterfuges. (See the chapter on *Fraud*)

Just because something can possibly be imitated, however, it is absurd to conclude that it therefore does not exist. Haven't the means of imitating somnambulistic lucidity to the point of causing illusion been recently discovered? And just because this deceitful method has been used in all the carnivals, must we therefore conclude that there are no true somnambulists? Just because some retailers sell adulterated wine can we say that there is no such thing as pure wine? The same applies to direct writing; however, the precautions that were taken to assure the reality of the phenomenon were very simple and easy, and thanks to these, there can no longer be any doubt about the phenomenon nowadays.

147. Since the possibility of writing without an intermediary is an attribute of spirits, who have always existed and in every era have produced the various phenomena with which we are familiar, they surely must have produced direct writing during antiquity as well as today. This could explain the appearance of the four words written on Belshazzar's²⁶ party hall wall. During the Middle Ages – so steeped in secretive wonders, which the stake tried to hush up – direct writing must also have been known about. Perhaps, in the theory regarding the modifications that spirits can produce in matter (and which we developed in chap. VIII), the principle for the medieval belief in the transmutation of metals may be found.

Whatever the results obtained in previous eras may have been, however, it was only after the popularization of spirit manifestations that the issue of direct writing began to be taken seriously. The first time it became known in Paris a few years ago

²⁶ Son of Nebuchadnezzar II and last king of Babylon, who was warned of his doom by handwriting on the wall, and which was interpreted by Daniel – Tr.

seems to have been when Baron Guldenstubbe published a very interesting work on the subject employing a large number of facsimiles that had been written in this manner.²⁷ The phenomenon had already been known about in America for quite some time. Guldenstubbe's social position, his independence and the respect he enjoyed in high society undeniably discounted any suspected voluntary fraud because he had no ulterior motive to encourage him. At most, what could be accepted was that he had been the victim of illusion himself. However, a decisive fact was presented against such a notion: the same phenomenon was witnessed by other persons, who had taken all the necessary precautions for avoiding any fraud or cause for error.

148. As with most of the *non-spontaneous* spirit manifestations, direct writing is received through meditation, prayer and evocation. Many times it has been obtained in churches, on tombs and at the foot of statues and images of the personages so evoked. Yet, it is obvious that the location serves only to influence meditation and engender greater mental concentration, since it has been shown to be equally obtainable without such accessories and in the most ordinary places such as upon simple domestic furniture, whenever the required moral conditions exist and if the necessary mediumistic faculty is available.

At first, it was found that it was necessary to place a pencil and paper together; thus, the phenomenon could be more easily explained. Since we know that spirits can move and dislocate objects and that they can sometimes pick them up and throw them about, then they could easily pick up a pencil and write with it. Since they can also write by using the medium's hand or planchette²⁸ as an intermediary, then they can surely write directly. Consequently, it was soon discovered that the pencil was

²⁷ *La Réalité des Esprits et de leurs manifestations, démontrée par le phénomène de l'écriture directe*, by the Baron of Guldenstubbe, vol. 1, no. 8, with 15 pictures and 93 facsimiles – Auth.

²⁸ See explanation in no. 156 – Tr.

unnecessary, that it was enough to supply a sheet of paper, folded or not, and that in a few minutes, letters would begin to appear. Here, the phenomenon completely changed its character and we were introduced to another order of ideas. The letters were written with some kind of substance, and since we were not the ones who furnished it, the spirit itself had to have produced and brought it. But from where? That was the question.

If we refer back to chap. VIII, nos. 127 and 128, we will find a complete explanation for this phenomenon. In this type of writing, a spirit does not use our substances or instruments. It itself produces what it needs by drawing matter from the universal primitive element, which, under the influence of the spirit's will, undergoes the necessary modifications to attain the desired effect. In this way it can produce the writing of a red pencil, typographical printer's ink or ordinary ink, like black ink, or even typographical characters that are sufficiently firm to leave an indentation in the paper, as we have had the opportunity to witness. The daughter of one of our acquaintances, a girl of 12 or 13 years, received pages written in something resembling pastel colors.

149. Such was the result that led us to the phenomenon of the snuffbox in chap. VII, no. 116 - a matter we discussed at great length because it seemed to be an opportunity to probe into one of the most important laws of Spiritism, a law whose understanding could clarify many mysteries surrounding the invisible world. It is thus that the light can be derived from an apparently ordinary incident; we only need to observe closely, something we and everyone else can do when we do not limit ourselves to watching effects without looking for their underlying causes. If our faith becomes stronger day by day, it is because we understand. Make sure you understand if you want to win serious adherents. The understanding of matters has a further result in that it establishes a dividing line between truth and superstition.

If we take into consideration the advantages that direct writing can offer, we will admit that until now its main usefulness has consisted in the material proof of an important fact: the intervention of a hidden power that can use this process as a new means of manifesting itself. However, communications obtained in this way are rarely very lengthy. They are generally spontaneous and are limited to words, sentences and, quite often, unintelligible symbols. They may occur in all languages: Greek, Latin, Syriac, in hieroglyphs, etc., but they cannot yet lend themselves to the continuous and rapid conversations obtained through psychography – writing using the medium's hand.

Pneumatophony

150. Since spirits can produce noises and raps, they can naturally make all kinds of cries and vocal sounds, including imitating the human voice, either right at our side or in the air. We call this phenomenon *pneumatophony*. According to what we know about the nature of spirits, we can imagine that some of those who belong to a lower order are deluded with the belief that they can speak as they did when they were alive. (See *Revue Spirite*, Feb. 1858: *Histoire du revenant de mademoiselle Clarion*)

We must therefore avoid taking for occult voices all sounds with an unknown cause behind them, or a simple ringing in the ears, and especially accepting the popular belief that ringing ears are warning us that someone is talking about us somewhere. These ringings have a purely physiological cause and are meaningless, whereas the sounds of pneumatophony express thoughts, and we can thus recognize that there is an intelligent rather than an accidental cause behind them. As a guiding principle, we can establish the fact that only *obviously intelligent* effects can attest to the manifestation of spirits. As for other effects, the odds are

more than a hundred to one in favor of them being produced by fortuitous causes.

151. When we are half-asleep we frequently hear words, names and sometimes entire sentences distinctly pronounced so loudly that we awaken startled. Although some of these incidents may really be manifestations, there is nothing so remarkable about them that we cannot attribute them to a cause similar to what we developed in the theory of hallucination (chap. VI, nos. 111 ff.). Hence, what is usually heard in this state is of no consequence. The same does not apply, however, when we are truly awake, because then if we are actually hearing a spirit, we can usually exchange thoughts with it and strike up a normal conversation.

Spirit sounds or pneumatophonics manifest in two very distinct ways: sometimes as an inner voice that resonates within us, and although the words may be clear and distinct, they are not physically produced; at other times, as words that are outside of us and which are so distinctly articulated that they seem to be coming from someone standing right beside us.

Whichever way it is produced, the phenomenon of pneumatophony is nearly always spontaneous and it can rarely be evoked.

CHAPTER XIII



Psycography

- Indirect Psychography: Baskets and Planchettes
 - Direct or Manual Psychography

Indirect Psychography: Baskets and Planchettes

152. Spiritist science has progressed like all the other sciences but even more rapidly. Only a few short years separate us from the primitive and incomplete methods that we trivially called *table turning*, to where we are now, communicating with spirits as easily and quickly as ordinary persons do amongst themselves and by the same means: speaking and writing. Writing has the special advantage of physically demonstrating the intervention of a concealed power by leaving traces that we can preserve in the same way that we can preserve our own correspondence. Our first method was to use planchettes or small baskets fitted with a pencil, and which were prepared as follows.

153. As we have stated, a person gifted with a special aptitude can produce a rotational movement in a table or other

object. Instead of a table, let us take a little basket of four to six inches in diameter (it does not matter if it is wood or wicker; the substance is not important). Now if we firmly attach a pencil to the bottom of the basket, with the tip pointed downwards, and keep it balanced on a sheet of paper while placing our fingers on the edge of the basket, it will begin to move. Instead of turning, however, the basket will guide the pencil in various directions on the paper in order to trace meaningless symbols or letters. If a spirit is evoked and wishes to take part, it will respond not with raps but by writing. The movement of the basket is not automatic like that of the turning tables; it becomes an intelligent process. Rigged in this manner, the pencil does not return to the margin to begin another line when it reaches the edge of the paper, but continues to write in a circle. The writing thus forms a spiral, which requires rotating the paper in order to read it. The writing received in this way is not always very legible, because words are not separated, but by using a sort of intuition the medium can easily decipher it. For the sake of economy we can replace the paper and pencil with a slate and slate pencil. We shall call this little basket by the name *spinning basket*. The basket is sometimes replaced with a cardboard box similar to a little pill box, with the pencil forming an axis like in the game called teetotum.²⁹

154. Many other gadgets have been invented for the same purpose. The most convenient is what we shall call the *beaked basket*, which consists in fitting to the basket a wooden spindle in an inclined position and sticking out of the basket a few inches, resembling a ship's bowsprit. After boring a hole in the tip of the spindle, a pencil is placed in it, which is long enough to rest its point on the paper. Then, the medium places his or her fingers on the edge of the basket and the entire instrument moves with

²⁹ A top, usually having four lettered sides, used to play various games of chance. *American Heritage College Dictionary*, 1979 – Tr.

the pencil writing as described above, except that the writing is usually more legible with spaces between the words, and the lines are not in a spiral but in parallel as in normal writing, because the medium can easily return the pencil when each line is finished. We have obtained dissertations of many pages using this method and as rapidly as if we had hand-written them.

155. The manifesting intelligence often reveals itself through other unequivocal signs. For example, when coming to the end of the page, the pencil spontaneously makes a motion for it to be turned over; if it wants to refer to a preceding passage on the same page or on another, it indicates it with the pencil point – as someone would do with his or her finger – and underlines it. If the spirit wants to direct itself toward a particular participant, the tip of the wooden basket points toward that person. For brevity, it often uses a special sign for *yes* and *no* as we do by nodding or shaking our head. If it wants to show anger or impatience, it taps repeatedly with the pencil and often ends up breaking the point.

156. Some persons replace the basket with a type of specially made miniature table about five inches in length and about two inches in height, with three legs and a pencil attached to one; the other two are rounded or fitted with a little ivory ball so that they can slide easily across the paper. Still others simply use a square, triangular, oval or rectangular *planchette* about five inches long with an *oblique* hole near one of the edges into which a pencil is fitted. When placed on the paper to write, it tilts and is supported on one side on the paper. Sometimes it is fitted with two small wheels on each side to facilitate the movement. In conclusion, we should understand that there is nothing absolute about any of these devices. The most convenient is the best.

With whichever type of apparatus is used, there must be two operators, but they do not both have to be mediums. One only serves to help balance the device and reduce the medium's fatigue.

Direct or Manual Psychography

157. We call writing received in the above manner *indirect psychography*, as opposed to *direct* or *manual psychography* written by mediums themselves. In order to understand the latter system one must know how it works. The communicating spirit acts upon the medium who, under its influence, then *mechanically* moves his or her arm and hand to write, but in most cases does not have the least awareness of what is being written; the hand acts upon the basket, and the basket upon the pencil. Thus, *the basket itself does not become intelligent* but only serves as an instrument for an intelligence. The basket is actually nothing more than a pencil holder, an extension of the hand and an intermediary between hand and pencil. By simply eliminating this intermediary and placing the pencil directly in the medium's hand, we get the same result with a much simpler mechanism since the medium writes as is done under normal conditions. Therefore, any medium who writes with the help of a basket, planchette or other device can also write directly. Of all the means of communicating, manual writing, which some call *involuntary writing*, is undoubtedly the simplest, easiest and most convenient since it requires no preparation, and like ordinary writing, it lends itself to more extensive dissertations. We will return to this subject when we discuss mediums.

158. When these manifestations first began to appear and as no one yet had a precise understanding of them, there were many publications containing articles such as: *Communications of a basket, of a planchette, of a table*, etc.; however, today we understand

that such expressions are insufficient or erroneous, even without having to consider their frivolous character. Actually, as we have already seen, the tables, planchettes and baskets are not *intelligent* instruments, although they are momentarily animated with fictitious life; yet none of them can communicate by themselves. Understanding to the contrary would be taking the effect for the cause, or the instrument for the principle. It would be like an author writing under the title of his or her book that it had been written 'by' a metallic pen or 'by' a goose quill. Furthermore, such instruments are not exclusive. We know someone who instead of a *spinning basket* uses a funnel with a pencil in the neck. Hence, communications could be received with a funnel, a saucepan or a salad bowl. If they are received by means of raps, not with a table but with a chair or walking-stick, then there will not be a talking table, but a talking chair or stick. One can see that what is important to understand is not the instrument but the manner in which the communications are obtained. No matter what supports the pencil, if we obtain them by writing, we call it *psychography*; if by raps, we call it *typtology*. In taking on the proportions of an actual science, Spiritism requires scientific language.

CHAPTER XIV



Mediums

- Physical Effects Mediums • Electrical Persons • Sensitive or Impressionable Mediums • Hearing Mediums • Speaking Mediums • Seeing Mediums • Somnambulistic Mediums
- Healing Mediums • Pneumatographical Mediums

159. Every individual who senses the influence of spirits to any degree of intensity is a medium. This faculty is inherent to humankind. It therefore does not constitute an exclusive privilege, and there are very few individuals who do not possess it at least in a rudimentary state. Thus, we can state that everyone is a medium to a certain degree. Usually, however, this label is applied solely to those who possess a well characterized mediumistic faculty that expresses itself through patent effects of a certain intensity, which depends on a more or less sensitive physical organization. One should further note that this faculty does not express itself in all mediums in the same way. Mediums usually have a special aptitude for this or that order of phenomena, which divides them into as many different varieties as there are kinds of manifestations. The main varieties are: *physical effects mediums*, *sensitive* or

impressionable mediums, hearing, speaking, seeing, somnambulist, healing, pneumatographic, writing or psychographical mediums.

Physical Effects Mediums

160. *Physical effects mediums* are particularly able to induce physical phenomena such as movements of inert objects, noises, etc. They may be divided into *facultative mediums* and *involuntary mediums*. (See pt. 2, chaps. II and IV)

Facultative mediums are aware of their ability and induce spirit phenomena through their own will. As we have stated, although this faculty is inherent in the human species, it is far from manifesting itself in all mediums to the same degree. However, if there are few individuals who do not possess it at all, there are even fewer who can induce impressive effects, such as suspending heavy objects in midair, moving them through the air and, especially, inducing apparitions. The simplest effects involve the rotation of an object, raps produced by the lifting of an object or raps produced internally in the object's own substance. Although we do not attribute any major importance to these phenomena, we nevertheless do not believe they should be slighted. They can provide interesting observations and can contribute to strengthening one's convictions, but one should note that the faculty of inducing physical effects rarely manifests among those who have more advanced means of communication at their disposal, such as writing and speech. The faculty usually decreases to the degree that another develops.

161. *Involuntary or natural mediums* are those who exert their influence without realizing it. They are unaware of their ability and almost always, whatever happens around them that appears to be abnormal does not seem so extraordinary to them at all. These matters make up part of who they are, exactly like

persons gifted with second sight but who are unaware of it. These individuals are worthy of observation and we should not neglect gathering and studying the facts of this kind that may come to our attention. They have occurred throughout history and frequently among young children. (See chap. V: *Spontaneous Manifestations*)

This faculty is not per se an indication of a pathological state, because it is not incompatible with perfect health. If the person who possesses it is ill, the illness is caused by something else. Moreover, therapeutic procedures are powerless to make it disappear. In some cases it can appear after a certain period of organic weakness, but it is never the weakness' efficient cause. Therefore, there is no reason to become concerned with it as far as one's health is concerned. There would only be a problem if the individual, upon becoming a facultative medium, used it in an abusive manner, for then there could be an excessive emission of vital fluid, which could then result in organic weakening.

162. Reason revolts at remembering the mental and physical tortures that science has sometimes inflicted on feeble and delicate persons in order to assure that there was no fraud on their part. Most of the time, such *experiments* performed with evil intentions are often harmful to sensitive organisms and can cause serious disorders in the organic economy. Performing tests such as these is to play with life itself. A good faith researcher does not need to employ such means. Those who are familiar with these phenomena moreover know that they belong more to the mental than to the physical order, and that it would be futile to try to find their solution in our exact sciences.

Due to the fact that these phenomena belong to the mental order, everything that could over excite the imagination of such persons should be avoided with a no-less rigorous caution. We know how many accidents can produce fear, and there would be less imprudence if we knew all the cases of mental infirmity and epilepsy that are provoked by stories of werewolves and bogeymen. So what

would happen if they could persuade someone that he or she was dealing with the *Devil*? Those who seek to convince others of such ideas do not know the responsibility they assume: *they can kill*! And this danger does not exist only for the patients themselves, but also for those around them, who might become terrified by thinking that their house has become a den of demons. It was this disastrous belief that produced acts of atrocity in times of ignorance. Therefore, a little discernment would be sufficient to understand that in burning bodies considered to be possessed by the Devil, they did not burn the Devil. Since they desired to free themselves of the Devil, then they should have burned him instead. By enlightening us about the true cause of all these phenomena, the Spiritist Doctrine deals the deathblow to this belief. *Thus, far from confirming such an idea, it is our moral and humane duty to fight it wherever it exists.*

What should be done when a faculty of this kind spontaneously develops in an individual is to allow the phenomena to follow their natural course: nature is wiser than human beings. Moreover, Providence has its plans and the most humble creature may serve as the instrument of its broadest designs. Nonetheless, we must concede that the phenomena sometimes assume fatiguing and importune proportions for everyone involved.³⁰ In every case, here is what

³⁰ One of the most extraordinary incidents of this nature, both for the variety and strangeness of the phenomena, is undoubtedly one that took place in 1852 in the Palatinate (a province in Bavaria) of Bergzabern, close to Wissemburg. It is all the more remarkable since it brought together in the same individual almost all the types of spontaneous manifestations: loud noises that shook the house, overturned furniture; objects thrown about by an invisible hand; visions and apparitions, somnambulism, ecstasy, catalepsy, electrical attraction, cries and sounds in the air; musical instruments played without being touched, intelligent communications, etc. Furthermore, what is no less important is that these events were attested to for nearly two years by numerous eyewitnesses worthy of being believed because of their knowledge and social position. The official report of the occurrences was published at the time by several German newspapers and, particularly, in a now-defunct brochure, whose copies are quite rare. However, the complete translation of the brochure is contained in *Revue Spirite* of 1858, with commentaries and necessary explanations. As far as we know, that was the only French publication that has made reference to it. Besides the fascinating interest that they arouse, such phenomena are eminently educational from the point of view of the practical study of Spiritism – Auth.

should be done. In chapter V, *Spontaneous Physical Manifestations*, we already provided some advice on the matter by stating that we must establish relations with the spirit in order to know what it wants. The following method is equally based on observation.

The invisible beings who reveal their presence through sensible effects are usually low order spirits whom we can control through moral ascendancy, and it is this condition of ascendancy that we must endeavor to acquire.

In order to do so it is necessary that the individual pass from the state of *natural medium* to that of *facultative medium*. An effect is produced similar to what occurs during somnambulism. We know that natural somnambulism generally ceases when replaced by magnetic somnambulism. The liberating faculty of the soul is not extinguished but is rather given another course to follow. The same thing happens with the mediumistic faculty. Instead of preventing the manifestations, which can rarely be done and is not free of danger, we must teach the medium to induce them by the will, imposing it upon the spirit. In this way the medium manages to overpower it, making a dominating and sometimes tyrannical spirit into a subordinate, frequently quite docile one. A noteworthy fact is that experience has confirmed that in such a case a child can have the same or even greater authority than an adult. This is another proof of the fundamental principle of the Doctrine, according to which a spirit is only a child due to its physical body, but has within itself a development that it had acquired prior to its current incarnation, which can confer upon it an ascendancy over spirits who are less evolved.

The moralization of a spirit through the counsels of a third influential and experienced individual – if the medium is in no position to do so – is nearly always an effective means. We shall return to this subject later.

Electrical Persons

163. It would seem that to this mediumistic category belong those persons gifted with a certain charge of natural electricity, who are veritable *human torpedoes*, producing the effects of attraction and repulsion through simple contact. However, it would be erroneous to regard them as *mediums*, since true mediumship supposes the direct intervention of a spirit, and experiments have conclusively shown that in this particular case electricity is the only agent behind the phenomena. This strange faculty, which may almost always be regarded as an illness, can sometimes be linked to mediumship, as seen in the case of the *Spirit-rapper of Bergzabern*; however, most of the time it is completely independent. According to what we have stated, the sole proof of spirit intervention is the intelligent character of the manifestations. Whenever this factor is absent, it is most logical to attribute the phenomena to purely physical causes. The question still remains as to whether *electrical persons* might have a greater aptitude for becoming *physical effects mediums*. We believe they would, but only experience will verify it.

Sensitive or Impressionable Mediums

164. This label is used to designate individuals capable of sensing the presence of spirits through a vague impression, a sort of general shudder of which they do not know the cause. This variety does not display any well defined characteristics, however. Mediums are necessarily impressionable, and thus impressionability is a quality that may be regarded as more general than special – it is a rudimentary faculty that is indispensable to the development of all the others. It differs from purely physical and nervous impressionability, with which

it should not be confused, for there are persons who are not neurologically sensitive but who sense the presence of spirits to varying degrees, while others who are very susceptible cannot perceive them at all.

This faculty develops with habit and can attain such subtlety that through the sensation received the individual possessing it can recognize not only the good or evil nature of a nearby spirit, but also its individuality, as a blind person recognizes the approach of this or that individual by a sort of sensation. In relation to spirits, this type of medium is a true sensitive. A good spirit always produces a soft pleasant impression; an evil one, on the other hand, produces a painful, anxious and unpleasant impression – it seems to bring an odor of impurity.

Hearing Mediums

165. These mediums can hear the voice of spirits. As we stated when discussing pneumatophony, it is sometimes an internal voice that is heard deep down, while at other times it is an external voice as clear and distinct as if by a living person. Hearing mediums can thus converse with spirits and when they acquire the ability to communicate with certain ones, they immediately recognize them by the tone of their voice. Persons who do not possess this faculty can also communicate with a spirit through a hearing medium, who then acts as an interpreter.

This faculty is very pleasing when such mediums hear only good spirits or those whom they call, but the same is not true when evil spirits hound them, making them hear every minute the most disagreeable and often most inappropriate things. In such cases it is necessary to get rid of them through the method we shall indicate in the chapter on *Obsession*.

Speaking Mediums

166. Hearing mediums, who only transmit what they hear, are not actually *speaking mediums*, who most of the time do not hear anything at all. With such mediums, spirits act upon their vocal organs, just as they act upon the hands of writing mediums. In order to communicate, a spirit utilizes the most flexible organ it can find in a particular medium. From one it borrows the hand; from another, the vocal cords or from a third, the ears. In general, speaking mediums express themselves without any awareness of what they are saying, and they nearly always address subjects completely foreign to their customary ideas, outside their sphere of knowledge and even beyond the reach of their intelligence. Although they are perfectly awake and normal during the process, they rarely remember what they have said. In other words, the medium's voice is an instrument that the spirit uses, and through whom another person can converse with it, as is the case with a hearing medium.

Nevertheless, the speaking medium's passivity is not always so complete. There are those who have an intuition about what they are saying at the time they utter the words. We shall focus on this variety when we address intuitive mediums.

Seeing Mediums

167. Seeing mediums are those gifted with the ability to see spirits. There are those who enjoy this faculty in a normal state, who are perfectly awake and who retain a precise memory of what they have seen. Others display it only in the somnambulistic state or one close to somnambulism. This faculty is rarely permanent, since it is almost always the result of a sudden and temporary crisis. In this category of seeing mediums we may include all

individuals gifted with second sight. The ability to see spirits while dreaming is also a kind of mediumship, but does not comprise seeing mediumship per se. (We have explained this phenomenon in chap. VI, *Visual Manifestations*).

Like those with second sight, seeing mediums believe they see through their eyes, but in reality it is their soul who sees, which is why they can see either with their eyes closed or open. Thus, a blind person can see spirits as well as someone with normal sight. It would be interesting to perform a study on this issue to see if this faculty is more frequent among the blind. Spirits who have lived on the earth as blind individuals have told us that through their soul they had a perception of certain objects and that they were not immersed in *total* darkness after all.

168. We must distinguish between accidental and spontaneous apparitions and the actual faculty for seeing spirits. The former most frequently occur at the time of the death of loved or known individuals who have come to serve warning that they no longer belong to this world. There are numerous examples of such cases, not to mention those that occur as visions during sleep. At other times, they are relatives or friends who, although dead for quite some time, appear to warn us of danger, to provide counsel or to ask a favor, which normally consists in carrying out some kind of service that they could not complete while alive, but which may also entail prayers.

These apparitions comprise isolated events and always have an individual and personal character about them; consequently, they do not comprise a faculty per se. The faculty itself consists in the ability – if not permanent, at least quite frequent – to see any spirits at all, even those who are completely unknown. This faculty is what defines the seeing medium, properly speaking.

Among seeing mediums there are those who see only evoked spirits, who can describe in the smallest detail their gestures, facial

expressions, the characteristic outline of their face, their clothing and even the feelings they express. There are others who possess the faculty in a more generalized sense, who see the entire surrounding spirit population going and coming, and, we might say, going about their daily business.

169. On one particular evening we were watching a performance of the opera 'Oberon' while seated beside an excellent seeing medium. A large number of the seats were empty but many were occupied by spirits who seemed to be watching the performance. Some were sitting close to various audience members and seemed to be listening in on their conversations. On the stage, another scene was occurring; behind the performers, several jovial spirits were having fun pantomiming them, grotesquely imitating their movements. More serious spirits, however, appeared to be inspiring the singers, supporting them by giving them more energy. One of these stayed next to one of the principal female singers. We judged its intentions as rather frivolous and after the curtain closed we evoked it. Upon responding to us it severely reproved our rash judgment: "I am not what you think; I am her guide, her protector spirit and it is my responsibility to direct her." After a few minutes of very serious conversation, it left us saying, "Goodbye. She is in her dressing-room and I must watch over her." We also evoked the spirit of Weber, the opera's composer, during the performance and asked him what he thought of it. "It isn't bad," he responded, "but weak; the performers sing, but that is all. It lacks inspiration. Wait," he added. "I shall try to infuse them with a little of the sacred fire!" We then saw him hovering over the stage above the singers. An emanation appeared to flow from him to them, enveloping them. At that moment, there was a visible resurgence of energy amongst them.

170. Here is another event that proves the influence that spirits exert upon humans without their knowing about it. We

were watching a theatrical performance like the other one but with another seeing medium. While we were conversing with a *spirit spectator* it told us, "Do you see those two ladies by themselves in that box in the first tier? Well, I am going to make them leave the theater." He then entered the ladies' box and began to talk to them. They had been attentively watching the show when they suddenly looked at each other, seemed to consult each other, then left and did not return. The spirit then gave us a merry gesture, meaning he had fulfilled his word, but we did not see him again to ask him for more explanations. In this manner, we have often been witnesses of the role that spirits play among the living. We have observed them in many places where people gather: dances, concerts, sermons, funerals, weddings, etc., and everywhere we have found them stimulating evil passions, inciting discord, exciting disputes and rejoicing in their exploits. Others, on the contrary, fight this harmful influence but they are rarely listened to.

171. The faculty for seeing spirits can undoubtedly be developed but it is one of those whose development should proceed naturally without being artificially stimulated in order to avoid being exposed to illusions of the imagination. When we possess the seed of a faculty, it will sprout by itself. As a rule, we should be content with the abilities that God has granted us and not seek the impossible, because if we want even more we run the risk of losing what we already have.

When we mentioned that the cases involving spontaneous apparitions frequently occur (no. 107), we did not mean that they are very common. Those involving seeing mediums per se are even rarer and we have many reasons for distrusting those who claim to have that faculty. One is prudent not to trust them without positive proof. We are not referring to those who feed the ridiculous illusion of globular spirits, which we described in no. 108, but those who claim to see spirits in a more rational manner.

Some persons could undoubtedly be sincere though mistaken, but others may simulate the faculty out of vanity or for ulterior motives. In judging such cases we must pay special attention to the person's character, morality and sincerity; however, it is especially in the details of the circumstances that we find the surest means of appraisal. There are circumstances that can leave no doubt, such as those involving exact descriptions of spirits whom the medium never had the opportunity to know when they were incarnated. The following case belongs to this category.

A widow lady, whose late husband frequently communicated with her, met a seeing medium one day who did not know her or her family. The medium said to her, "I see a spirit beside you." "Oh," replied the lady, "that is probably my husband, who almost never leaves me." "No," responded the medium, "it is a lady of a certain age, who has a strange hairdo and who is wearing a white headband."

Because of this particularity and other descriptive details, the widow fully recognized her grandmother, whom she had not even been thinking about at the time. If the medium had only been faking the faculty, it would have been easier to follow the widow's suggestion, but instead of the husband, whom she had been thinking about, he saw a woman with a unique hairdo, of which he could have had no idea. Moreover, this case proves that what the medium saw was not a reflection of any outside thought. (See no. 102)

Somnambulistic Mediums

172. Somnambulism can be considered as a variety of mediumistic faculty, or rather, we should say that these two types of phenomena are frequently found together. Somnambulists act under the influence of their own spirit; it is their own soul

who, in moments of emancipation, sees, hears and perceives beyond the limits of the senses. What they express proceeds from themselves. Their ideas are generally more correct than during their normal state and their knowledge is broader since their soul is free. In other words, they live in anticipation of the spirit life. Mediums, on the other hand, serve as instruments for an outside intelligence; they are passive and what they express is not their own. In sum, somnambulists express their own thoughts, while mediums express the thoughts of others. However, the spirit who communicates through an ordinary medium might also do so through a somnambulist. Frequently, the same state of the soul's emancipation during somnambulism makes spirit communication easier. Many somnambulists see spirits perfectly well and describe them with the same precision as seeing mediums. They can converse with them and transmit their thought to us; thus, what they say beyond the circle of their personal knowledge is almost always suggested to them by other spirits. The following is a notable example involving the simultaneous action of the somnambulist's spirit and another spirit, who reveals itself unequivocally:

173. One of our friends employed as a somnambulist a young boy of 14 or 15 years and of quite low intelligence and extremely limited education. In the somnambulistic state, however, he showed extraordinary lucidity and great astuteness. He displayed his abilities particularly in the treatment of diseases, having performed numerous healings that were otherwise considered incurable. One day as he was attending a sick man, he described the illness with perfect precision, "That is not enough," he was told. "Now you must prescribe a remedy." "I can't," he responded. "*My angel doctor isn't here.*" "Who is your angel doctor?" "The one who prescribes the remedies." "Then, you yourself don't see the remedies?" "Oh, no; didn't I just say my angel doctor prescribes them?"

Thus, in the case of this somnambulist, it was his own spirit who *saw* what the disease was and it did not need any assistance, but the medical prescriptions were made by another spirit. If the latter was not present, the former could say nothing about them. By himself, he was only a *somnambulist*; assisted by whom he called his angel doctor, he was a *somnambulistic medium*.

174. The lucidity of the somnambulistic faculty is one that depends on the organism, and so it is independent of the elevation, advancement and moral condition of the subject. As a result, somnambulists may be very lucid but incapable of resolving certain issues if their spirit is little-advanced. Somnambulists who speak by themselves may therefore say good and bad, true or false things, and use greater or lesser delicacy and scruples in their procedures, depending on the degree of elevation or inferiority of their own spirit. In these cases, the assistance of another spirit may overcome their deficiencies. However, as is the case with mediums, somnambulists can also be assisted by lying, frivolous or even evil spirits. This is where the somnambulist's moral qualities have an especially large influence in order to attract good spirits. (See *The Spirits' Book*, sect. on *Somnambulism*, no. 425, and in this book, the chap. on *The Medium's Moral Influence*).

Healing Mediums

175. We shall here only mention this variety of medium, because the subject would require a much greater development than our present purposes will allow. Moreover, we have been informed that a doctor friend of ours has proposed to address the subject in a special work on intuitive medicine. We will only say that this kind of mediumship consists mainly in the gift that

some people have of healing by simple touch, by a look or even a gesture, without resorting to any medication whatsoever. This will certainly be regarded simply as magnetism, and it is obvious that the magnetic fluid plays a large role. However, when the phenomenon is examined with due care, one may easily recognize the presence of something more. Common magnetization is a bona fide form of treatment requiring a methodical and regular sequence. In mediumistic healing, however, matters proceed in an entirely different manner. All magnetizers are able to heal to some degree if they know how to go about it correctly, but among healing mediums the faculty is spontaneous and they sometimes possess it without ever having heard of magnetism. The intervention of a hidden power – the characteristic of mediumship – becomes obvious in certain circumstances, especially when we consider that most of the individuals who qualify as healing mediums resort to prayer, and this prayer in itself becomes a true *evocation*. (See no. 131)

176. Following are responses we received from the Spirits on the subject:

1) *May we regard individuals gifted with magnetic power as forming a variety of mediumship?*

“You should have no questions about that.”

2) *So mediums are intermediaries between spirits and humans, while magnetizers, who draw upon their own forces, do not appear to serve as intermediaries for any foreign power.*

“That is an erroneous idea. The magnetic force belongs to the individuals, but is augmented with the help of the spirits to whom they appeal for it. For example, if you use magnetism to heal, and you evoke a good spirit who takes an interest in both you and the sick person, it augments your own forces and willpower by directing your fluids and giving them the necessary qualities.”

3) *Nonetheless, there are excellent magnetizers who do not believe in spirits.*

“So do you think that spirits only act upon those who believe in them? Those who magnetize for good purposes are aided by good spirits. All those with moral aspirations call to them without realizing it, in the same way that through the desire for evil and bad intentions others call to evil ones.”

4) *Would magnetizers who believe in the intervention of spirits act more effectively?*

“They could do things that would be regarded as miracles.”

5) *Do some individuals actually have the gift of being able to heal by simple touch without employing magnetic passes?*³¹

“Certainly; haven’t you seen several examples?”

6) *Do such cases involve magnetic action or only the influence of spirits?*

“Both. Such individuals are bona fide mediums since they act under the influence of spirits, but that does not mean that they are what you understand to be healing mediums, for example.”

7) *Is this power transmittable?*

“Not the power itself, but rather the understanding of what is needed to exert it when one possesses it. There are those who would not even suspect they had this power if they did not think that it had been transmitted to them.”

8) *Can healing be effected through prayer alone?*

“Yes, sometimes God allows this; however, it is sometimes for sick persons’ own good to continue to suffer, and they then think their prayers have not been heard.”

9) *Are certain prayer formulas more effective than others for healing?*

“Only superstition could attribute virtue to certain words, and only ignorant or deceitful spirits could entertain such an idea by prescribing formulas. However, for persons who are little-

³¹ PASSES: “... a fluidic-magnetic procedure, whose main objective is to aid in the recovering of a patient’s organic balance.” Gurgel, Luiz Carlos, *O Passe Espírita*, Chap. 1, p. 113, Federação Espírita Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1994 (translation ours). – Tr.

enlightened and incapable of understanding purely spiritual matters, the use of a formula might contribute to deepening their confidence. In such a case, it is not the formula that is effective, but rather the faith that has been augmented by the belief attached to the use of the formula.”

Pneumatographical Mediums

177. This designation applies to mediums who have an aptitude for obtaining direct writing, a gift that is not given to all writing mediums. This faculty has remained quite rare. It can probably be developed through practice but, as we have stated, its practical usefulness is limited to its being obvious proof of the intervention of a concealed power in the manifestations. Only experience can tell if someone possesses it. Thus, one may experiment with it just as one may inquire of a protector spirit through other forms of communication. Depending on the greater or lesser power of the medium, simple traces, symbols, letters, words, sentences and even entire pages may be obtained. All that is usually required is to place a sheet of folded paper somewhere or in a place designated by the spirit for ten or fifteen minutes or a bit longer. Prayer and meditation are essential; thus, we consider it impossible for it to work in non-serious meetings or where persons are not animated with sentiments of affinity and benevolence. (See the explanation of direct writing, chap. VIII, *Laboratory of the Invisible World*, nos. 127 ff., and chap. XII, *Pneumatography*).

We will address writing mediums in particular in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER XV



Writing or Psychographic Mediums

- Mechanical Mediums • Intuitive Mediums • Semi-Mechanical Mediums • Inspired Mediums • Prescient Mediums

178. Of all the forms of communication, manual writing is the simplest, the most convenient, and, especially, the most complete. All effort should be made to develop it, for it enables relationships to be established with spirits that are as lasting and regular as those we maintain amongst ourselves. We stress its use so highly because it is the method through which spirits best reveal their nature and the degree of their elevation or lowliness. Through the ease with which they can express themselves in this way, they provide us with knowledge of their inmost thoughts, enabling us to evaluate them and determine their true worth. Moreover, for the medium this faculty is the most susceptible of being developed with practice.

Mechanical Mediums

179. If we examine certain effects that manifest in the movements of a table, a basket or planchette that writes, we will have no doubt that a spirit is exerting a direct action upon these objects. The basket sometimes moves about so violently that it jumps from the medium's hands; at other times it will move toward certain individuals in the circle in order to strike them; at other times its movements display affection. The same occurs when a pencil is placed in the medium's hand. Often, it will fly out of the hand, or the hand or basket may move convulsively and angrily tap the tabletop – all this while the medium is perfectly calm but surprised at not being able to control the movements. We would state, in passing, that such effects always denote the presence of less evolved spirits; high order spirits are always calm and full of dignity and benevolence. If they are not listened to with proper respect, they withdraw and others take their place.

Thus, a spirit can express its thought directly, whether by moving an object for which the medium's hand only acts as support, or by acting directly upon the hand.

When a spirit acts directly upon the medium's hand, it impels it completely independently of the medium's will. The hand writes without stopping and despite the medium's will for as long as the spirit has something to say, and will then stop when it has finished.

What characterizes the phenomenon in this instance is that the medium is completely unaware of what he or she is writing. This absolute unawareness characterizes those whom we call *passive* or *mechanical mediums*. This faculty is all the more valuable since it does not leave the slightest doubt about the independent thought of the entity doing the writing.

Intuitive Mediums

180. The transmission of a spirit's thought may also occur by means of the medium's own spirit, or rather, his or her soul, since we use that term for the spirit while incarnated. In this case, the communicating spirit does not act directly upon the hand in order to make it write, for it neither holds it nor guides it, but acts upon the soul with which it identifies itself. Then, under this impulsion, the medium's soul guides the hand, which in turn guides the pencil. Here we must note an important fact: the communicating spirit does not replace the medium's soul, because it could not dislodge it from the body; rather, it dominates it apart from the medium's will and impresses its own will on it. Consequently, the soul's role is not completely passive; it receives the spirit's thought and transmits it. In this situation, the medium is conscious of what is being written, although it is not a reflection of his or her own thought. This type of person is called an *intuitive medium*.

One might say that there is nothing in this method that proves that it is another spirit instead of the medium's own spirit who does the writing. In fact, the distinction is sometimes quite difficult to make, but this may not be important, in that one can recognize the spirit-suggested thoughts by the fact that the medium has never had such thoughts him or herself; they are suggested while they are being written down and often are even contrary to the ideas that the medium previously had regarding the subject. Moreover, they may be well beyond the knowledge and capabilities of the medium.

The role of mechanical mediums is that of a machine, whereas intuitive mediums act as interpreters. In order to transmit thoughts, the latter must comprehend them, and in a sense assimilate them in order to faithfully translate them. But

the thoughts are not their own; they do nothing more than pass through their brain. This is precisely the role of intuitive mediums.

Semi-Mechanical Mediums

181. In the case of purely mechanical mediums the movement of the hand is independent of their will, while with intuitive mediums the movement is voluntary and facultative. Semi-mechanical mediums, on the other hand, are a blend of both; that is, they feel their hand being moved without their willing it to do so, but at the same time they are aware of what is being written while the words are being formed. With the first, the medium's thought appears *after* the writing; with the second, *before* the writing; with the third, *while* the writing is in process. Semi-mechanical mediums are the most numerous.

Inspired Mediums

182. All those who either in a normal or an ecstatic state receive mental communications that are foreign to their own preconceived ideas may be considered to be *inspired mediums*. They may be regarded as an intuitive variety, but with the difference that the intervention of a concealed power is much less detectible, for with an inspired medium it is more difficult to distinguish between the inspired thought itself and the medium's own thought. What characterizes the former is especially its spontaneity. We may receive inspiration from spirits who influence us either for good or evil, but it is mainly the help of those who want what is good for us, whose counsels we most often fail to follow. This applies to all the circumstances of our life, in the decisions we must make. In this sense we could say that *all are mediums* since there are none who do not have their protector and familiar spirits, who do

everything they can to transmit good thoughts to their wards. If everyone were convinced of this truth, they would more frequently draw upon the inspiration of their guardian angel in moments when they do not know what to say or do. Let us *fervently* and *confidently* evoke our protector spirit in times of need, and we will more assiduously wonder at the ideas that arise as if by magic, whether for help in making a decision or in something to be done. If no idea arises immediately, then all we must do is wait. The proof that we are dealing with a suggested idea is precisely in that if it were our own, it would always have been at our disposal and there would have been no reason for it not to have manifested at our beck and call. Those who are not blind only need to open their eyes whenever they want to see. In the same way, those who have their own ideas always have them at their disposal, but if they do not surface when they want them, it is because they must go in search of them outside themselves.

In this category we may also include persons who, without being gifted with exceptional intelligence and without leaving their normal state, have flashes of intellectual lucidity that endows them with surprising ease of conception and elocution and, in certain cases, a presentiment about the future. At such times, which we rightly call inspirational, ideas abound and follow upon one another in an involuntary and almost feverish impulse. It seems like a higher intelligence has come to our aid and that our spirit has been freed of a great burden.

183. All geniuses, artists, scholars and literati are undoubtedly advanced spirits with the ability to comprehend and conceive of great things, and it is precisely because spirits judge them as possessing such abilities that, whenever they want to accomplish certain deeds, they suggest the necessary ideas to them. It is thus that in most instances *they are mediums without realizing it*. Nevertheless, they have a vague intuition of being assisted, for

those who appeal for inspiration actually make an evocation. If they expected not to be heard, why would they often exclaim: My guardian angel, help me!

The following responses confirm this assertion:

1) *What is the primary cause of inspiration?*

“Mental communication from a spirit.”

2) *Is inspiration only meant for great revelations?*

“No. It is almost always meant for the most common life circumstances. For example, you want to go somewhere and a secret voice tells you not to because you would meet with danger, or this voice suggests that you do something that you had not thought of. This is inspiration. There are very few people who have not been inspired on many occasions.”

3) *In moments of inspiration can writers, painters or musicians, for example, be regarded as mediums?*

“Yes, because in such moments their soul is freer and more separate from matter, and thus it recovers part of its faculties as a spirit and more easily receives communications from other spirits who inspire it.”

Prescient Mediums

184. A presentiment is a vague intuition about future events. Certain individuals possess this faculty to different degrees of development. It may be regarded as a type of second sight that enables them to see the consequences of the present and the natural chain of events. But they are also often the result of concealed communications, and it is particularly in these instances that the individuals so gifted may be called *prescient mediums*, who comprise a variety of *inspired medium*.

CHAPTER XVI



Special Mediums

- Special Aptitudes of Mediums • Synoptic Table of the Different Varieties • Varieties of Writing Mediums

Special Aptitudes of Mediums

185. Besides the mediumistic categories already enumerated, mediumship offers infinite varieties that include what may be called special mediums, those gifted with still-undefined particular aptitudes, apart from the qualities and knowledge of the manifesting spirit.

The nature of the resulting communication is always related to the nature of the spirit and bears the stamp of its degree of evolution, its wisdom or its ignorance. But in spite of similarities among spirits of the same degree on the hierarchical scale, there is undeniably a tendency for each spirit to occupy itself with a particular specialty. Spirits who produce raps, for example, rarely depart from physical manifestations, while among those who provide intelligent manifestations there are spirits who are poets, musicians, painters, scholars, moralists, physicians, etc. We are referring to spirits of an average order because in a more elevated degree of the hierarchy the aptitudes blend into the unity of

perfection. However, alongside the aptitude of the spirit itself is the aptitude of the medium, the instrument that may be either more appropriate and flexible or less so, and in which the spirit discovers individual qualities that we cannot always appraise.

Let us make a comparison: a very skillful musician has several violins at his disposal, which, to the ordinary person all appear to be good instruments, but among which the consummate artist can tell a big difference, perceiving extremely delicate nuances that will enable him to choose some and reject others, nuances that he perceives by intuition without being able to define them. The same applies to mediums: despite the equality of their state as to mediumistic potency, a spirit will nevertheless prefer one over another according to the type of communications it wishes to transmit. As a result, we see, for example, mediums under the influence of a spirit who writes admirable poetry, even though they themselves have never been able to make verse in their ordinary state. Others, on the contrary, are normally poets, but as mediums they only write prose in spite of their desire to write poems. The same happens with paintings, music, etc. There are mediums who, without possessing scientific knowledge, are most capable of receiving communications of this nature. Others are more skillful at historical studies; others more easily serve as interpreters for moralist spirits. In a word, whatever the medium's flexibility may be, the communications he or she receives most generally have a special stamp. Furthermore, there are those who never leave a determined circle of ideas and when they try to do so, they only receive incomplete, laconic and often erroneous communications. Besides the issue of aptitudes, spirits also prefer to communicate through this or that medium according to the affinity between them. Thus, in spite of an obvious similarity of conditions, the same spirit will be more explicit through certain mediums solely because they are better suited to it.

186. It would be wrong to expect to receive good kinds of communications of every variety just because we have a good writing medium at our disposal. The first condition is undoubtedly to be sure about the source of the communications, which means the qualities of the spirit who transmits them. However, we must no less surmise the qualities of the mediumistic instrument offered to the spirit. We must therefore study the nature of the medium as well as that of the spirit because they are both essential elements for a satisfactory result. There is, however, a third element that is equally important: the intent, the inner thought and the degree of praiseworthiness of whoever interrogates the spirit. This is easy to understand. *In order for a communication to be a good one, it must come from a good spirit. In order for such a good spirit to be ABLE to transmit it, it must have a good instrument at its disposal. In order for it to WANT to transmit it, the objective must suit it.* The spirit, who reads the thought, surmises whether the proposed question deserves a serious response and whether the person who formulates it is worthy of a response. If not, it does not waste time sowing seeds among the stones. That is when frivolous and mocking spirits take action because, since they are little concerned about the truth, they do not analyze the subject as they should and are generally as little scrupulous about the means as about the ends.

Let us now summarize the principal kinds of mediumship in the form of a sort of synoptic table comprised of those that have already been described in the preceding chapters, indicating the paragraph numbers in which they are treated in more detail.

We have grouped the different mediumistic varieties according to the similarities of cause and effect, but this classification is in no way absolute. Some are found quite often; others, to the contrary, are rare and even exceptional – a fact which we have been careful to point out. These latter indications were all

supplied by the Spirits who, furthermore, reviewed this table with particular care and completed it with several observations and new categories so that we can say that it is now entirely their own work. When we have deemed it worthwhile, we have highlighted their textual observations by using quotation marks.³² Most of them are by *Erastus* and *Socrates*.

Synoptic Table of the Different Varieties

187. We may divide mediums into two large categories:

PHYSICAL EFFECTS MEDIUMS – Those who have the power to induce physical effects or ostensive manifestations. (See no. 160)

INTELLECTUAL EFFECTS MEDIUMS – Those who are more especially able to receive and transmit intelligent communications. (See nos. 65 ff.)

All the other varieties may be directly linked in various degrees to one or the other of these two categories and a few fit into both. By analyzing the various phenomena produced under mediumistic influence, we see that all of them include a physical effect of some kind and that such effects almost always appear along with an intelligent effect of some kind. It is sometimes difficult to establish a dividing line between both categories, but this does not present a serious problem. In the classification of *intellectual effects mediums* we have included those who can more especially serve as intermediary instruments for regular and continuous communications. (See no. 133)

188. Varieties common to all types of mediumship:

³² For typographical purposes and clarity, we have used both quotation marks and italic type – Tr.

Sensitive mediums – Individuals who are susceptible to sensing the presence of spirits through a general or localized, vague or physical sensation. Most of them distinguish between good and evil spirits by the nature of the resultant sensation. (See no. 164)

“Due to the resultant fatigue, delicate and overly sensitive mediums must abstain from communicating with violent spirits or those who cause a feeling of tiredness.”

Natural or unconscious mediums – Those who induce phenomena spontaneously without the intervention of their own will, and most of the time without even being aware of it. (See no. 161)

Facultative or voluntary mediums – Those who have the ability to induce phenomena through an act of their own will. (See no. 160)

“As great as this will may be, they can do nothing if the spirits refuse to come, which proves the intervention of an exterior power.”

189. Special physical effects varieties:

Typtological mediums – Those through whose influence noises and raps are produced. A common variety, in which the medium's will may or may not participate.

Motor mediums – Those who induce inert objects to move. Very common. (See no. 61)

Mediums for displacements and suspensions – Those who induce the displacement of inert objects or their suspension in the air without any point of support. They are more or less rare, depending on the intensity of the phenomenon they can precipitate. There are also some who can levitate, but they are rarer still. (See nos. 75 ff. and no. 80)

Musical effects mediums – Those who induce the playing of musical instruments without contact. Very rare. (See no. 74, quest. 24)

Mediums for apparitions – Those who induce fluidic or tangible apparitions that are visible to those watching. Very rare. (See no. 100, quest. 27; and no. 104)

Mediums for apportations – Those who serve spirits for the carrying of physical objects. A variety of motor and displacement medium. Exceptional. (See no. 96)

Nocturnal mediums – Those who obtain certain physical effects in darkness. Following is a spirit's response about whether or not these mediums may be regarded as a separate variety:

“Certainly, these mediums may represent a specialty, but the phenomenon is due more to the environmental conditions than to the nature of the medium or spirit. I should add that some mediums escape this peculiar influence of the environment, and that with a little practice most nocturnal mediums could produce the phenomena in both light and darkness.

“This variety of medium is not very common and we must make it clear that it is due to this requirement for darkness that allows for complete freedom to employ trickery, ventriloquism, and acoustic tubes, by which charlatans have frequently duped the credulous by passing themselves off as mediums in order to get money. But it does not matter. Tricksters in rooms, like tricksters in public squares, will be cruelly unmasked, and the Spirits will show them that they do wrong in interfering in their work. Yes, I repeat: certain charlatans shall be openly and very rudely exposed so that their role as fake mediums will end – it is only a matter of time.”

Erastus

Pneumatographical mediums – Those who obtain direct writing. A very rare phenomenon and especially easy to imitate by charlatanism. (See no. 177)

Contrary to our own opinion, the Spirits have insisted that we place direct writing among the phenomena of the physical order because, according to them, *“Intelligent effects are those that a spirit produces by utilizing the elements present in the medium's brain, which is not the case with direct writing. The medium's action in this instance is entirely physical,*

while in the writing medium, even if completely mechanical, the brain always plays an active role."

Healing mediums – Those who have the ability to cure or alleviate illnesses by the imposition of hands or through prayer.

"This faculty is not essentially mediumistic, because all true believers possess it whether they are mediums or not. It is frequently no more than the over-excitation of the magnetic power, which is strengthened, if needed, by the participation of good spirits." (See no. 175)

Developer mediums – Those who have the ability to develop the writing faculty in others through their influence.

"There is more of a magnetic effect than a mediumistic one per se, for it does not indicate the actual intervention of a spirit. In any case, it belongs to the order of physical effects." (See chap. on *The Formation of Mediums*)

190. Special intellectual effects mediums; various aptitudes:

Hearing mediums – Those who hear spirits. Very common. (See no. 165)

"There are many individuals who fancy that they hear something that really only exists in their own imagination."

Speaking mediums – Those who speak under the influence of spirits. Very common. (See no. 166)

Seeing mediums – Those who see spirits while awake. The accidental and fortuitous sight of a spirit in a determined circumstance is very frequent, but the habitual or facultative seeing of spirits without any distinction is exceptional. (See no. 167)

"The present condition of your physical organism opposes this aptitude; thus, it is always prudent at first not to believe those who say they see spirits."

Inspirational mediums – Those who receive thoughts suggested by spirits, usually without being aware of it, whether for the ordinary matters of life or for great intellectual works. (See no. 182)

Prescient mediums – Those who in certain circumstances have a vague intuition of future common occurrences. (See no. 184)

Prophetic mediums – A variety of inspirational or prescient medium, who receive, with God's permission, and with greater precision than prescient mediums, a revelation of future events of general interest, and who are charged with transmitting it to others for instructive purposes.

"If there are true prophets, there are also false ones, who take the delusions of their own imaginations to be revelations, whereas they are, in fact, pretenders passing themselves off as prophets out of ambition." (See no. 624 of *The Spirits' Book* concerning the characteristics of a true prophet)

Somnambulistic mediums – those who are assisted by spirits while in a somnambulistic trance. (See no. 172)

Ecstatic mediums – those who receive revelations from spirits while in a state of ecstasy.

"Many ecstasies are victims of their own imagination and of deceiving spirits who take advantage of their heightened state. There are very few who merit complete trust."

Painting or drawing mediums – Those who paint or draw under the influence of spirits. We are referring to those who obtain serious works, because we could not apply this name to certain mediums whom mocking spirits cause to produce grotesque works that the least experienced student would disavow.

"Frivolous spirits are great imitators. When the famous drawings of Jupiter appeared, a large number of alleged drawing mediums arose, with whom mocking spirits had great fun by making them produce the most ridiculous things. One of these spirits, in order to eclipse the drawings of Jupiter, if not in quality, then at least in quantity, caused a medium to draw a monument that required so many sheets of paper that they could be stacked to the height of a two story building. Many

other mediums were made to draw supposed portraits that were merely caricatures.” (See *Revue Spirite*, Aug. 1858)

Musical mediums – Those who compose or perform music under the influence of spirits. There are mechanical, semi-mechanical, intuitive and inspirational musical mediums. There are also literary mediums of the same nature. (See the section on *Musical Effects Mediums*)

Varieties of Writing Mediums

191. 1) According to the method of execution:

Writing or psychographical mediums – Those who have the ability to write by themselves while under the influence of spirits.

Mechanical writing mediums – Those who write by receiving an involuntary impulse of their hand without being conscious of what they are writing. Very rare. (See no. 179)

Semi-mechanical mediums – Those who write under an involuntary impulse of their hand, but who are immediately conscious of the words and sentences they are writing. The most common. (See no. 181)

Intuitive mediums – Those who receive communications from spirits mentally, but who write by their own will. They differ from inspirational mediums, who do not necessarily have to write. Intuitive mediums, on the other hand, register thought, which is rapidly suggested concerning a specific topic. (See no. 180)

“These are quite common but they are also very prone to err because they often cannot discern what comes from the spirit from what comes from themselves.”

Polygraphical mediums – Those who change their handwriting according to the communicating spirit, or who have the ability to duplicate the handwriting that the communicating

spirit exhibited during its lifetime. The former is very common; the latter – identical handwriting – is rarer. (See no. 219)

Polyglot mediums – Those who have the faculty of speaking or writing in unknown languages. Very rare.

Illiterate mediums – Those who write only as mediums, since they can neither read nor write in their normal state.

“Much rarer than the preceding types. There is a greater physical difficulty to overcome.”

192. 2) According to the development of the faculty:

Novice mediums – Those whose faculties are not yet completely developed and who do not yet possess the necessary experience.

Unproductive mediums – Those who only receive unimportant things: monosyllables, letters or strokes. (See chap. on the *Formation of Mediums*)

Developed or fully formed mediums – Those who have their mediumistic faculties fully developed and who transmit communications easily, rapidly and without hesitation. We should understand that these mediums’ abilities can only be obtained through practice, whereas among *novice mediums* the communications are slow and difficult.

Laconic mediums – Those who receive communications easily but which are brief and undeveloped.

Explicit mediums – Those who receive broad and lengthy communications like those one would expect from a consummate writer.

“This aptitude is related to the ease with which the fluids are combined. Spirits seek out these mediums in order to address subjects that require great development.”

Experienced mediums – Ease of writing is a matter of practice and can be obtained relatively quickly, whereas experience is the result of seriously studying all the difficulties that may arise in the practice of Spiritism. Experience confers upon mediums the

necessary tact for appraising the nature of the spirits who manifest, for determining through the smallest indications their good or evil qualities and for discerning the trickery of deceptive spirits who disguise themselves with the appearance of truth. We easily comprehend the importance of this quality, without which all others would lose their real usefulness. The problem is that many mediums confuse experience – the fruit of study – with an ability arising solely from the organism. They deem themselves to be masters because they write easily, but they reject all counsel and become the prey of deceitful and hypocritical spirits who latch onto them by flattering their pride. (See the next chap. on *Obsession*)

Flexible mediums – Those who possess faculties that more easily lend themselves to the diverse kinds of communications, and through whom all or nearly all spirits can manifest either spontaneously or through evocation.

“This variety of medium is very close to the sensitive type.”

Exclusive mediums – Those who are preferred by a certain spirit, even to the exclusion of all others. This spirit responds in the stead of all others who are called through the medium.

“This always results from a lack of flexibility. When the spirit is good, it may link itself to the medium out of affinity and for a praiseworthy purpose; when it is evil, however, it always aims to submit the medium to its control. It is more of a defect than a quality and is very close to obsession.” (See chapter on *Obsession*)

Mediums for evocations – Flexible mediums are naturally more appropriate for this kind of communication and are more able to respond to the specific questions that are addressed to them. However, for cases of evocation there are also entirely specialized mediums.

“Their responses are almost always confined to a limited area and are incompatible with the development of general topics.”

Mediums for spontaneous communications – Those who receive spontaneous communications by spirits who have not been called.

When mediums have this faculty, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to evoke a spirit by using them as an intermediary.

“Nevertheless, they are better equipped than those of the evocation variety. The term ‘equipped’ should be understood as referring to the cerebral elements because a more developed intelligence is often more necessary – I would even say always necessary – for spontaneous communications than for evocations. Here, ‘spontaneous communications’ means those that truly merit the designation and not a few incomplete sentences or a few banal thoughts that are generally found in human remarks.”

193. 3) According to the type and specialty of the communications:

Verse-making mediums – Those who most easily receive communications in verse. Very common for bad verse; very rare for good verse.

Poetic mediums – Although they do not receive verse per se, they do receive communications of a vaporous, sentimental style without any harsh quality about them. They are more able than the others at expressing tender and affectionate sentiments. Everything in their communications is vague, and it would not be worthwhile to require anything precise from them. Very common.

Positive mediums – Generally, their communications display a clean and precise character, which spontaneously lends itself to circumstantial details and exact teachings. Very rare.

Literary mediums – Those who do not display the vague tone of poetic mediums or the down-to-earth tone of positive mediums, but who write with sagacity. Their style is correct, elegant and frequently of notable eloquence.

Incorrect mediums – Those who obtain very good communications and thoughts displaying irreproachable morality, but whose style is diffuse, incorrect and full of repetitions and improper terms.

“The material incorrectness of style usually stems from the medium’s lack of education; this type of medium consequently does not serve as a good instrument for the spirit. However, the spirit attaches little importance to this matter, since for it thought is what is essential, and so it leaves the medium free to provide the appropriate form. The same does not apply to erroneous and illogical ideas that may be communicated, which are always an indication of the low evolutionary degree of the manifesting spirit.”

Historian mediums – Those who have a special aptitude for historical dissertations. Like all others, this faculty does not depend on the medium’s own knowledge, for there are uneducated individuals – even children – who address subjects far beyond their reach. A rare variety of positive medium.

Scientific mediums – We do not say *scientists*, because these may be very uneducated; despite this, however, they are especially able to receive communications related to the sciences.

Medical mediums – Their specialty is that of most easily serving spirits as interpreters for medical prescriptions. They must not be confused with *healing mediums*, because they do nothing more than transmit the spirit’s thought and do not exert any influence in and of themselves. Quite common.

Religious mediums – Those who more especially receive communications of a religious character or address questions related to religion, notwithstanding their own beliefs and practices.

Philosophical/moralist mediums – Those whose communications generally address moral issues or profound philosophy. Very common for moral issues.

“All these nuances comprise a diversity in the aptitudes of good mediums. As for those who have special aptitudes for certain scientific, historical, medical and other communications above their current reach, we can be certain that they possessed such knowledge in another existence and have retained it in a latent state, thereby making up

part of the cerebral elements needed for a spirit's communication. These elements are what make it easy for the spirit to transmit its own ideas, since these mediums are for the spirit instruments who are more intelligent and malleable than an ignorant one would be."

Erastus

Mediums for trivial and obscene communications:

These words indicate the kind of communications that certain mediums habitually receive and the nature of the spirits who transmit them. Whoever has studied the spirit world in all its degrees knows that there are spirits whose perversity is on par with that of the most depraved individuals, and who are pleased to express their thoughts through the grossest words. Others, who are less abject, content themselves with trivial expressions. It is understandable that these mediums should desire to free themselves from being preferred by such spirits, and aspire to be like those who receive communications that never display an unseemly word. Only through a strange mental aberration and a lack of good sense could one believe that such language could come from good spirits.

194. 4) According to the medium's physical qualities:

Calm mediums – Those who always write at a rather slow pace without the least agitation.

Fast mediums – Those who write with a speed that they could not voluntarily produce in their normal state. Spirits communicate with them at the speed of lightning. One could say that they possess a super-abundance of fluid, which enables them to instantly identify with a spirit. Because of the speed, however, this quality has the inconvenience of rendering the writing almost illegible to all except the medium him or herself.

"It is also very tiring because it uselessly wastes a great deal of fluid."

Convulsive mediums – Those who remain in an over-excited, almost feverish state. Their hand – sometimes their entire body –

trembles in such a way that they cannot control it. The cause is undoubtedly in their own physical composition, but much also depends on the nature of the spirits who communicate through them. Good and benevolent spirits produce an agreeable and gentle impression; evil ones, on the other hand, a painful impression.

“These mediums should rarely use their faculty, because frequent use can adversely affect their nervous system.” (See chap. on *Identity*, *Distinction between Good and Evil Spirits*)

195. 5) According to the medium's moral qualities:

We only mention these mediums in passing at this point in order to complete the table, since we shall address them in the following special chapters: *The Moral Influence of Mediums*, *Obsession*, *The Identity of Spirits*, and others for which we ask particular attention. We will observe the influence that the qualities and shortcomings of mediums can exert on the reliability of the communications, and which mediums can rightly consider themselves to be *imperfect* or *good mediums*.

196. Imperfect mediums:

Obsessed mediums – Those who cannot free themselves of importunate and deceptive spirits, but who are nonetheless not fooled by them.

Deluded mediums – Those who are fooled by deceptive spirits and delude themselves about the nature of the communications they receive.

Subjugated mediums – Those who are morally and often physically dominated by evil spirits.

Frivolous mediums – Those who do not take their faculty seriously but use it only as entertainment or for useless purposes.

Indifferent mediums – These take no moral advantage of the instructions they receive, nor do they change anything about their conduct and habits.

Presumptuous mediums – Those who claim that they are in touch only with highly evolved spirits. They deem themselves infallible and regard whatever does not come through themselves as inferior and erroneous.

Proud mediums – Those who flatter themselves because of the communications they receive. They think they have nothing more to learn about Spiritism and do not take to heart the lessons they frequently receive from spirits. They are not content with the faculties they currently possess – they want all of them.

Susceptible mediums – A variety of proud medium, who take offense at the criticisms leveled at their communications. They are hurt by the least remark against them. When they display what they have received, it is meant to elicit admiration rather than an opinion. They usually have an aversion for persons who do not lavish praise upon them and avoid meetings in which they cannot impose themselves and dominate.

“Let them strut about elsewhere and seek a more complacent audience – or let them keep entirely to themselves. Meetings without their presence lose nothing.”

Erastus

Mediums for hire – Those who exploit their faculties.

Ambitious mediums – Those who, even though they do not actually sell their abilities, nonetheless hope to get something for them.

Bad faith mediums – Those who, despite having real abilities, pretend to have others in order to appear more important. However, we cannot label as mediums those persons who, having no mediumistic faculty whatsoever, only produce false phenomena through charlatanism.

Selfish mediums – Those who only employ their abilities for their own use and keep the communications they receive to themselves.

Jealous mediums – Those who regard with spite those mediums who are more appreciated and more highly developed.

All these bad qualities necessarily have their counterpart in good mediums.

197. Good mediums:

Serious mediums – Those who only use their abilities for the good and for truly useful purposes. They regard it as a profanation to put them at the service of curious and indifferent persons or for useless purposes.

Modest mediums – Those who attribute no merit to themselves for the communications they receive no matter how good they may be. They feel foreign to the communications and do not imagine themselves to be beyond deception. Instead of running from impartial criticism, they ask for it.

Devoted mediums – Those who understand that true mediums have a mission to fulfill and that, when necessary, they must sacrifice their likes, habits, pleasures, time and even their material interests for the good of others.

Trustworthy mediums – Those who, besides the ease with which they receive communications, merit great confidence due to their own character and the elevated nature of the spirits who assist them; they are less likely to be deceived. Later, we shall see that this trustworthiness has nothing to do with the respectability of the names taken by spirits.

“It is undeniable, and you must well understand, that by exposing the qualities and defects of mediums in this way you will provoke annoyance and even animosity on the part of some. But what does it matter? Mediumship is expanding more and more, and mediums who were to take these remarks badly would only show that they are not good mediums, which means that they are actually assisted by less evolved spirits. Moreover, as I have already stated, all this shall quickly pass, and bad mediums who abuse their abilities or put them to bad use will

suffer sad consequences — as has already been the case with some. They will learn at their own cost the consequences for turning a gift that God has given them for their own moral progress into satisfying their earthly passions. If you cannot lead them back onto the moral path, pity them, for you may say that God has reproved them.”

Erastus

“This table is of great importance not only for the sincere mediums who, in reading it, will seek in good faith to save themselves from the stumbling blocks to which they may be exposed, but also for all those who make use of mediums, because it will provide them with a measure of what they can reasonably expect. The table, as well as the spirit-scale which is its supplement, should constantly be before those who concern themselves with manifestations. These two tables summarize all the principles of the Doctrine and will contribute more than you might think toward leading Spiritism onto its true path.”

Socrates

198. All the above mediumistic varieties present innumerable degrees of intensity. There are many that strictly speaking do not comprise more than simple nuances, but are nevertheless the result of special aptitudes. We must realize that only very rarely is the mediumistic faculty strictly limited to one type. A medium can undoubtedly have several aptitudes, but there will always be a predominant one, and this is the one that should be cultivated if it is useful. It is a grave mistake to want to in any way force the development of a faculty that one does not possess. On the other hand, it is necessary to cultivate all those that one possesses in a germinal state; however, to seek others is a waste of time in the first place, and in the second it could mean the loss and certainly the weakening of those that already exist.

“When the principle or seed of a faculty exists, it always expresses itself through unmistakable signs. If they would limit themselves to their own specialty, mediums could perfect it and obtain grand and beautiful results. However, if they concern themselves with everything, they will not get any good results. In passing, it should be noted that the desire to indefinitely extend the ambit of one’s faculties is pretentious pride, which the Spirits never leave unpunished. Good spirits always forsake the presumptuous, who then become the target of deceiving ones. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to see mediums who are not content with the faculties they have received and who, out of vanity or ambition, aspire to possess exceptional ones that they believe will make them famous. Such pretence takes away their most precious quality: being regarded as trustworthy mediums.”

Socrates

199. Studying the specialties of mediums is necessary not only for mediums themselves, but also for those who call upon them. According to the nature of the spirit whom one may want to evoke, and depending on the questions one wishes to ask, it is imperative to choose the most capable medium. Resorting to the first one who comes along is to expose oneself to receiving unsatisfactory or erroneous responses. Let us make a comparison using ordinary facts. We would not trust an original draft or even a simple copy to the first person to come along only because he or she knew how to write. A musician wants an excerpt of a song he has composed to be performed. There are several singers at his disposal, all of whom are skillful; however, he will not choose at random. For his interpreter he will try to find the one who has the voice, the capacity for expression – all the qualities that best correspond to the nature of the piece. Spirits do likewise concerning mediums, as we must do likewise concerning spirits.

We must further note that the variations presented through mediumship and to which others may be added, are not always according to the character of the mediums themselves. Thus, for example, a naturally joyful and jovial medium may habitually receive serious – even severe – communications, and *vice versa*. This is yet another proof that mediums act under the impulse of an outside influence. We shall return to this subject in the chapter dealing with the *moral influence of the medium*.

CHAPTER XVII



The Development of Mediums

• The Development of Mediumship • Changes in
Handwriting • The Loss and Suspension of Mediumship

The Development of Mediumship

200. We are here particularly addressing writing mediumship because this is the most widespread kind, and also because it is at the same time the simplest and most convenient, and the one that provides the most satisfactory and complete results. Furthermore, it is the one most sought after. At present, unfortunately, there is still no means of diagnosing, even roughly, those who possess this faculty. The physical signs that some take as indications are uncertain, and we may find it in children, old people, men and women, whatever their temperament, health status or degree of intellectual and moral development may be. There is only one way to ascertain its existence: experimentation.

As we have already seen, writing may be obtained by using baskets and planchettes or directly by hand. Since this last

method is the easiest and the only one used nowadays, it is the one we recommend. The process is quite simple, consisting merely in taking a pencil and paper and putting oneself in a writing position; no other preparation is needed. Nonetheless, several recommendations are indispensable for obtaining a good result.

201. As for the physical conditions, we recommend avoiding anything that might impede the free movement of the hand – it is preferable that it not entirely rest upon the paper. The point of the pencil should maintain enough contact to write but not so much as to offer any resistance. All these precautions are of no import, however, when the medium begins to write fluently, for then no obstacle at all can deter the hand. They are only preliminaries for the beginner.

202. It does not matter whether a pen or pencil is used. Some mediums prefer a pen, but it will only work for those who are fully-developed and who write calmly. There are mediums who write so quickly that using a pen would be nearly impossible or at least very inconvenient.³³ The same applies when the writing is jerky or irregular, or when dealing with violent spirits who tap the point and break it, tearing the paper.

203. The desire of all aspirants to mediumship is of course to be able to converse with the spirits of loved ones, but any impatience must be moderated because communication with a particular spirit nearly always presents physical difficulties that render doing so impossible for the novice. In order for a spirit to be able to communicate, there must be between it and the medium certain fluidic combinations, which are not always immediately established. Only to the degree that his or her mediumship develops will the medium little by little acquire the aptitude

³³ At that time, of course, pens consisted of quills or points that had to be continually dipped in ink – Tr.

needed to communicate with the first spirit who presents itself at the time. However, it could also be that the longed-for spirit is not in a favorable condition to communicate *in spite of actually being present*, or that it is neither able nor permitted to respond to the evocation. Thus, it is best if in the beginning the medium refrains from evoking a particular spirit to the exclusion of any other, since fluidic relations often cannot be very easily established between the two no matter how much affinity there may be. Consequently, before thinking about receiving communications from this or that spirit, it is first necessary to develop the faculty by making a generalized evocation, and especially by addressing one's guardian angel.

There are no sacramental formulas. Whoever claims to recite a formula that draws spirits may be firmly branded as an imposter, since formulas mean nothing to spirits. Nevertheless, the evocation must always be made in God's name. We may begin an evocation of a spirit by using the following phrases or similar ones: *I pray that Almighty God will allow a good spirit to communicate with me by causing me to write; I also pray to my guardian angel to assist me and protect me from evil spirits.* Then, we wait for a spirit to manifest itself by causing us to write something. It could be that the spirit whom we had hoped for will in fact manifest itself, or it could be an unknown one or even our guardian angel. In any case, it will usually identify itself by writing its name. This brings up the problem of *identity*, a problem that requires much experience to deal with because there are few novices who are not exposed to the possibility of being fooled. We shall soon address this issue in a special chapter.

When we want to call certain spirits, it is essential that we first address those whom we know to be good and attuned to us, and who might have a reason to answer, such as relatives and friends. Thus, we might make an evocation along these lines: *In the name*

of Almighty God, I pray that the spirit of (name) will communicate with me, or I pray to Almighty God to allow the spirit of (name) to communicate with me, or other words to that effect. Also, the first questions must be formulated in a way that the answers may be given as simply *yes* or *no*; for example, *Are you here? Do you wish to answer? Can you make me write?* etc. Later on, this precaution will be unnecessary. In the beginning, however, it is a means of establishing a relationship. The essential thing is that the question not be useless, that it not refer to private matters, and especially that it express a benevolent and sympathetic sentiment toward the spirit to whom it is addressed. (See special chapter on *Evocations*).

204. A more important guideline to observe than the manner of making the appeal is calmness and meditation combined with an ardent desire and a firm will to succeed. By ‘will’ we do not mean an ephemeral and inconsistent desire, allowing ourselves at any moment to be interrupted by other matters, but a serious and persevering determination sustained with firmness and *without impatience or anxiousness*. Meditation is aided by solitude, silence and the avoidance of anything that could cause a distraction. Thus, there is nothing more to it except this: renew the attempt every day for ten or fifteen minutes at the most each time for fifteen days, a month, two months – more if needed. We know of mediums who only began to display their abilities after six months of practice, whereas others began to write correctly from the start.

205. In order to avoid futile attempts, one could question a serious and high order spirit through another medium. However, it is worthwhile to remember that when we propose a question to spirits to find out whether or not we possess mediumship, they almost always answer in the affirmative, which nevertheless does not mean that there will not be many unfruitful attempts. This may easily be explained. If a generalized question is posed to a spirit, it

will respond in a generalized manner. We know that nothing is more flexible than the faculty of mediumship, for it may appear under the most varied forms and to the most diverse degrees. Thus, one may be a medium without realizing it or in a different sense than one would expect. To the vague question: *Am I a medium?* The spirit will respond: *Yes*. To the more precise question: *Am I a writing medium?* It might respond: *No*. One must also take the nature of the spirit being questioned into account. There are spirits who are so frivolous and so ignorant that they respond at random like true hair-brains. That is why we advise addressing enlightened spirits, who usually willingly respond to one's questions and point out the best course to follow – if there is to be a possibility of success.

206. An approach that almost always yields good results is the use of a good, flexible and already-developed medium as a temporary aid. If this medium places his or her hands or fingers upon the hand that is to do the writing, it is rare that it will not begin to move immediately. We may easily understand what occurs in such an instance: the hand holding the pencil becomes a kind of appendage of the medium's own hand, much like a basket or planchette. However, this does not mean the exercise is not very useful when employed, because if it is repeated frequently and regularly, it will help to overcome any physical obstacles and enable the faculty to develop. It is also sometimes sufficient to intently magnetize the arm and hand of the one who desires to write. Often, all the magnetizer has to do is place his or her hand on the person's shoulder; we have seen individuals immediately begin to write under such influence. The same effect may be obtained without any contact whatsoever and by a simple effort of the will. It is easy to understand that the confidence of the magnetizer in his or her ability to produce such a result must play a large role, and that an incredulous magnetizer will exert a weak influence or none at all.

The help of experienced guides is also sometimes very useful to point out a number of small precautions that novices usually neglect to the detriment of the speed at which they progress. It is especially useful for these guides to inform novices as to the nature of their first questions and the way in which they should be asked. Their role is that of a teacher who is no longer needed when the student becomes sufficiently skillful.

207. Another method that can also contribute a great deal to the faculty's development consists in gathering a certain number of individuals together, who are all animated with the same desire and intent. While waiting in absolute silence and spiritual meditation, they all simultaneously experiment with writing, each appealing to his or her guardian angel or to some sympathetic spirit. One of them can also make a generalized appeal to good spirits on behalf of all the members of the group, without special designation, and say, for example: *In the name of Almighty God, we pray that good spirits will communicate through the persons gathered here.* It is rare that among them there are not a few who promptly show signs of mediumship or who even write fluently in just a short time.

It is easy to understand what occurs in such an instance. Individuals gathered together for the same purpose form a collective whole, whose power and sensitivity increases through a kind of magnetic influence, which aids the faculty's development. Among the spirits attracted by this assembly of wills there are those who find the instrument that best suits them in the midst of the participants; if it is not one, then it will be another.

This method should be particularly employed by Spiritist groups that have no mediums available or that do not have them in sufficient number.

208. Means have been sought for finding processes for the developing of mediums as well as means for diagnosing mediumship.

However, at present, we know of no other means that are more effective than the ones we have just prescribed. By supposing that the obstacle to developing the ability is entirely physical, some individuals attempt to overcome it through a kind of gymnastics that can almost dislocate the arm and the head. We will not describe this process, which has come to us from across the Atlantic, not only because we have no proof of its effectiveness, but because we are convinced that it could actually be dangerous to delicate constitutions by harming the nervous system. If the seeds of the faculty are not there, nothing will work, not even the use of electricity, which some have already employed without success.

209. Faith is not an obligatory condition for beginners. There is no doubt that it aids the effort, but it is not indispensable. Pure intentions, desire and good will are enough. We have seen completely disbelieving persons become startled at writing without wanting to, while sincere believers cannot produce a single thing, which shows that the faculty is somehow related to organic predispositions.

210. The first indication of the ability to write is a sort of quivering in the arm or hand. Little by little the hand is seized by an impulse that it cannot control. Almost always, in the beginning, only meaningless symbols are traced. Later, the characters become more precise, and finally the writing progresses to end up acquiring the necessary speed. In all cases, however, it is always necessary to abandon the hand to its natural movement, that is, the hand should be neither hindered nor assisted.

Some mediums write fluently and easily from the start, sometimes even from the very first session, but that is quite rare. Others, for a long time, only succeed at strokes and handwriting exercises. The Spirits say that it is to loosen up their hand. If these exercises are too prolonged or degenerate into meaningless

scratches, it is undoubtedly a spirit having fun, because good spirits do nothing useless. In such a case, the fervor in appealing to the good spirits should be doubled. If despite this there is no change, one should stop once one notices that nothing worthwhile is going to occur. One may make a daily attempt but should stop at the first equivocal symbol in order not to provide an opportunity for mocking spirits.

One spirit added to these observations: *“There are mediums whose faculty cannot go beyond such symbols. When after a few months they obtain nothing more than insignificant responses such as a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’, or isolated letters, it would be useless to persist and a waste of paper.”* These are mediums, but *unproductive* ones. Moreover, the first communications should only be considered as mere exercises that are entrusted to secondary spirits, a reason for not attributing anything more to them beyond a mediocre value. They should be regarded as spirits employed (so to speak) as writing-masters, who train the novice medium. We should never believe that high order spirits would lead the medium to perform these preparatory exercises. In addition, if the medium does not have a serious objective, these preparatory spirits may remain and attach themselves to him or her. Nearly all mediums pass through this test in order to develop. It is their responsibility to win the affinity of truly highly evolved spirits.

211. The main difficulty encountered by most novice mediums involves having to deal with less evolved spirits, and they should consider themselves fortunate when such spirits are merely frivolous. All their attention should be employed not to allow them to gain a foothold, for once they are firmly attached, it is not always easy to break free of them. This is of paramount importance, especially at the beginning, in which, without taking the necessary precautions, it is possible to lose the fruits of the finest abilities.

The first precaution is for mediums to arm themselves with sincere faith under the protection of God, asking the assistance of their guardian angel. This spirit is always good, whereas familiar spirits, who are attuned to the good or bad qualities of the medium, may be frivolous or even evil.

The second precaution is for them to dedicate themselves with scrupulous care to recognizing, through all the indications that experience offers, the nature of the first communicating spirits, whom it is always prudent to distrust. If the indications are suspect, they should fervently appeal to their guardian angel and repel the evil spirit with all their might in order to discourage it by showing that it cannot deceive them. That is why a study of the Doctrine beforehand is indispensable if the medium intends to avoid the trouble that is inseparable from a lack of experience. Fully developed instructions for this matter may be found in the chapters on *Obsession* and *The Identity of Spirits*. Here we will limit ourselves to stating that besides language, we can consider *infallible* indications of less evolved spirits as including all useless or childish signs, figures, and symbols, and any kind of bizarre, irregular and intentionally malformed writing, whether exaggerated in size or ridiculous and unusual in form. Nevertheless, the writing can be very bad, even barely legible, without being unusual, a fact that might depend more on the medium than the spirit itself. We have seen mediums who are so badly deceived that they measured the superiority of the spirits by the size of the letters, assigning great importance to well-formed ones that appeared to be imprinted characters – a childishness that is really incompatible with true superiority.

212. If mediums must avoid unwillingly falling under the dominance of evil spirits, they should even more avoid voluntarily handing themselves over to them. An uncontrolled desire to write should not lead them to believe in the first spirit that comes along,

not even with the intention of freeing themselves from it later on when it no longer serves them. Anyone will suffer the consequences of asking for assistance in any matter whatsoever from an evil spirit, who may demand a very steep price for its services.

Some individuals, who have become impatient with their mediumistic development because it seems to be progressing too slowly, get the idea of seeking the help of any spirit whatsoever, *even an evil one*, planning to send it away later on. Many are quickly answered and immediately begin to write; however, the spirits, not at all minding having been summoned as a last resort, show themselves quite unmanageable when it comes time to leave. We have known mediums who were punished for their presumptuousness in thinking that they were strong enough to send such spirits away at will. They were submitted to years of obsession of every kind through the most outrageous hoaxes, through tenacious fascination³⁴ or even through *physical* disasters and the cruelest disappointments. The spirit at first showed itself to be plain evil but later became hypocritical by trying to make the medium believe that it had reformed, or by pretending that it was actually under the power of the medium, who could supposedly expel it whenever desired.

213. The writing is sometimes quite legible, with the words and letters perfectly salient, but with certain mediums the writing is difficult to decipher by anybody other than the person who has written it, making it necessary to become accustomed to it. Quite often the writing consists of large strokes – spirits are not concerned with saving paper. Whenever a word or sentence is hard to read, we ask the spirit to please write it again, which it usually does willingly. Whenever the writing is habitually illegible, even to the medium, he or she can nearly always render it clearer with

³⁴ See definition of this term below in chap. XXVII – Tr.

frequent and sustained practice *performed with much willpower* and by arduously beseeching the spirit to be more accurate. Often, some spirits adopt conventional marks, which they use during habitual meetings. For example, to show that it finds a question disagreeable and that it does not wish to respond, it will draw a long stroke or other such indication.

When the spirit reaches the end of what it wanted to say or no longer wants to respond, the medium's hand becomes still, and no matter what his or her ability or willpower may be, not another word will be obtained. On the other hand, when the spirit has not yet finished, the pencil continues without the hand being able to stop it. If the spirit wants to say something spontaneously, the hand compulsively picks up the pencil and begins to write without being able to oppose it. Moreover, the medium almost always feels something that indicates whether there has only been a pause in the communication or whether the spirit has indeed finished, and it is rare that the medium does not sense the spirit's departure.

These are the most important explanations we have to give in addressing psychographic development. With practice, experience will bring certain details to light which would not be worthwhile to discuss at present, and general principles will clarify how to approach them. If people would only experiment, more mediums would appear than was thought possible.

214. Everything we have stated so far applies to mechanical writing, which is the faculty that all mediums seek with good reason to develop. Yet, a purely mechanical function is very rare and quite frequently intuition is coupled with it to some degree. When mediums are aware of what they are writing, they are naturally led to doubt their ability, not knowing if the writing is their own or if it is from a spirit. They should not be overly concerned about it, however, and should proceed in spite of their doubt. By careful self-observation, they will easily recognize in the

writings many matters that do not pertain to themselves, or which are even contrary to their own thoughts – ample proof that they did not originate in their own mind. If they will continue, their doubt will dissipate with experience.

215. If certain mediums are unable to be exclusively mechanical, all attempts to obtain this result will be futile, but they would be mistaken to suppose they had been deprived altogether. If they are endowed only with intuitive mediumship, they should be content with it because it will render them a great service if they know how to take advantage of it instead of repudiating it.

After futile attempts have been made for quite some time, if there is no indication of involuntary movement, or if there are only movements that are too weak to produce results, one should not hesitate to write the first thought that comes to mind, without being concerned as to whether it is one's own or another's: experience will teach how to make the distinction. Besides, the mechanical movement will often develop later on.

We have stated above that there are cases in which it does not matter if a thought comes from the medium or from a spirit. This is especially true when purely intuitive or inspired mediums are writing a work involving their own imagination. In such a case, it matters little whether or not a thought has been suggested to them. If worthwhile ideas occur to them, they should thank their good spirit, who will then suggest more ideas to them. This is how poets, philosophers and scientists are inspired.

216. Let us now suppose that the mediums' faculty has been completely developed, that they write easily and are what we might call fully-developed mediums. It would be a big mistake on their part to regard themselves as being no longer in need of further instruction, since they will have merely overcome the physical resistance; it is now that the true difficulties begin and

that now, more than ever, they will need the advice of prudence and experience if they do not want to fall into the thousands of traps that will be awaiting them. If they want to fly blind on their own wings, it will not be long before they are deceived by lying spirits, who will try to exploit their presumptuousness.

217. Once the faculty has been developed, it is essential that mediums not abuse it. The satisfaction that some beginners derive from it elicits an enthusiasm that needs to be controlled. They must bear in mind that it has been given to them for good use and not to satisfy vain curiosity. Thus, it is essential that they only utilize it at appropriate times and not at every instant. Spirits are not constantly at their orders and they run the risk of being deceived by pranksters. To avoid such impropriety it is advisable to set certain days and hours aside for practicing mediumship so that one may be more concentrated, and so that the spirits who want to communicate, knowing about it in advance, will also be more disposed to be present.

218. If, in spite of all attempts, mediumship does not surface in some form, then it is best to give up on it, as a would-be singer would give up after discovering he or she had no voice after all. In the same way that someone who does not understand a foreign language resorts to an interpreter, the person will have to resort to another medium. But even if there is no medium available, we should not deem ourselves to be without the assistance of spirits. Mediumship is only one means for spirits to communicate, but it is not the sole means of attraction. Those who have dedicated their affection to us are with us whether or not we are mediums. A father does not abandon his son because the son is deaf and blind and can neither hear nor see him; on the contrary, he involves himself even more in his care – good spirits do the same for us. If they are unable to physically transmit their thought to us, they help us with their inspiration.

Changes in Handwriting

219. A very common phenomenon among writing mediums is the change in handwriting according to the spirits who communicate. The most notable example is that the same handwriting always repeats itself with the same spirit, often appearing identical to the handwriting it displayed during its lifetime. We shall later observe the consequences that can arise from this fact when we address identification. Such changes only occur with mechanical or semi-mechanical mediums, since their hand movement is involuntary and guided by the spirit. The same does not apply to purely intuitive mediums, because in their case the spirit only acts upon their thought and the hand is guided by the medium's own will as in ordinary writing. But if there are no changes in the styles of the writing, even with a mechanical medium, this proves nothing against his or her faculty in and of itself. Such changes are not an absolute condition in the manifestation of spirits, but result from a special aptitude with which the most purely mechanical mediums are not always gifted. We designate those who possess this gift as *polygraphic mediums*.

The Loss and Suspension of Mediumship

220. The mediumistic faculty is subject to interruptions and temporary suspensions both for physical manifestations and written ones. Following is the response of the Spirits to a few questions on the matter:

1) *Can mediums lose their faculty?*

“This frequently happens, whatever may be the type of faculty. But it is nearly always nothing more than a temporary interruption that ceases with the cause that has produced it.”

2) *Would the exhaustion of fluid be the cause of the loss of mediumship?*

“Whatever mediums’ ability may be, they have no ability whatsoever without the sympathetic cooperation of spirits. Whenever they do not receive anything, it is not always because they lack the faculty, but frequently because spirits do not want – or are even unable – to use them.”

3) *What causes spirits to abandon mediums?*

“The way in which they use their mediumship is what most influences good spirits. We may abandon them when they use it on futilities or for ambitious purposes, or when they refuse to transmit our words or to collaborate in producing phenomena for incarnates who beseech them or who need to see them in order to be finally convinced. God does not bestow this gift upon mediums for their own pleasure, even less for them to serve their ambitions; rather, it is to serve their own progress and to make the truth known to humankind. If spirits see that their mediums are no longer in harmony with their purposes or do not take advantage of the instructions and advice they give them, they withdraw and seek out more worthy wards.”

4) *Can't spirits who withdraw be replaced, and if so, how are we to understand the suspension of the faculty?*

“Indeed, there is no lack of spirits who are especially desirous to communicate and who are always ready to replace those who withdraw. However, when those who have withdrawn are good spirits, it is possible that they might have only withdrawn temporarily, depriving such mediums for a time of all communication so that they may learn a lesson and realize that their faculty *does not depend on themselves* and therefore must not be used for their own vanity. This temporary deprivation has the further aim of proving to them that they write under the influence of another; otherwise, they would not experience

interruptions. Moreover, the interruption of the faculty is not always a punishment, but sometimes demonstrates spirits' care for the mediums toward whom they are affectionate, and to whom they want to provide a respite when they deem it necessary. In that case, they will not permit other spirits to replace them."

5) *But morally speaking, there are mediums of great worth, who do not feel any need for respite and become very distressed at the interruption because they do not understand its purpose.*

"It serves to test their patience and to evaluate their perseverance. That is why spirits generally do not set a time limit on the suspension, because they want to see if their mediums become disheartened. It is also often for the purpose of allowing them time to meditate on the instructions that they have given them. Through such meditation we recognize who the truly serious Spiritists are. We cannot regard as such those who are actually mere amateurs at communications."

6) *Then is it necessary for mediums to continue attempting to write?*

"If their spirits so counsel, yes; if they have advised them to abstain, they must obey."

7) *Is there a way for them to shorten the test?*

"Yes, through resignation and prayer. At most, it is enough to make an attempt daily for a few minutes, for it would be useless to waste time on fruitless efforts. Such attempt only serves to verify whether the faculty has returned."

8) *Does the suspension imply the withdrawal of the spirits who habitually communicate?*

"In no way. Such mediums find themselves in the situation of persons who have temporarily lost their sight, but who have not been abandoned by their friends, even though they cannot see them. These mediums can and should continue to converse with their familiar spirits through thought and persuade themselves that they are indeed listened to. If the lack of mediumship can

deprive them of physical communications with certain spirits, it does not deprive them of mental ones.”

9) *Then the interruption of the mediumistic faculty is not always a rebuke by the spirits?*

“Of course not, since it can also be a demonstration of benevolence.”

10) *How can we recognize if an interruption is a rebuke?*

“Interrogate your conscience and ask yourself what use you have made of your faculty, what good others have derived from it and *what profit you have derived from the counsels that have been given to you*, and you will have your answer.”

11) *Can't mediums who have lost their writing ability resort to another medium?*

“That depends on the cause of the interruption. It is nearly always a need to allow them some time without communications after the counsels that have been given to them so that they do not get used to doing everything only under our guidance. In that case, they will not find what they are seeking with another medium. This has a further purpose, which is to demonstrate the independence of spirits, whom they cannot make act at their own pleasure. This is also the reason why those who are not mediums do not always obtain all the communications they desire.”

In fact, we must observe that those who resort to a third party to obtain communications, notwithstanding the medium's quality, often receive nothing satisfactory, whereas on other occasions, the responses are very explicit. It depends so much on the spirit's will that everything will remain the same in spite of the medium. It seems that the spirits themselves obey a word of order in this case, because whatever cannot be gotten from one medium cannot be obtained any better from another. We should thus avoid insisting and being impatient, so that we do not become victims of deceiving spirits, who will respond if we ardently desire it, for good spirits will allow them to do so in order to punish our insistence.

12) *For what purpose has Providence endowed certain individuals with special mediumistic abilities?*

“It is a mission they have been charged with and about which they should feel fortunate: they are interpreters between spirits and humankind.”

13) *But there are mediums who only reluctantly employ their faculty.*

“They are imperfect mediums. They do not realize the value of the grace that has been granted them.”

14) *If it is a mission, why doesn't it represent the privilege of moral individuals only, since it is also given to those who merit no consideration and who may even abuse it?*

“Precisely because such individuals need it in order to evolve, and so that they may have the possibility of receiving wise teachings. If they do not take advantage of it, they will suffer the consequences. Didn't Jesus himself prefer to speak to sinners, stating that it is necessary to give to those who are in need?”

15) *Couldn't persons who have a great desire to write as mediums but who do not manage it reach negative conclusions about themselves with regards to the goodwill of the spirits toward them?*

“No, because God could have refused to grant them the faculty, just as God could have refused them the gift of poetry or music; however, if they do not enjoy this faculty, they can enjoy others.”

16) *How can humans perfect themselves through spirits' teachings when they do not have the possibility of receiving such teachings directly, whether through themselves or through other mediums?*

“Don't they have books, just as Christians have the Gospel? In order to practice the morals of Jesus, Christians do not need to hear the words straight from the Master's own mouth.”



Problems and Dangers of Mediumship

- The Influence of the Practice of Mediumship
on the Health, the Mind and Children

221. 1) *Is the mediumistic faculty an indication of some pathological state or simply an abnormal one?*

“Sometimes abnormal, but not pathological. There are vigorously healthy mediums; unwell ones are so for other reasons.”

2) *Can exercising the mediumistic faculty cause fatigue?*

“The prolonged exercise of any faculty produces fatigue. The same happens with mediumship, especially the physical effects types, which necessarily cause an expenditure of fluids. This leads the medium to become fatigued, but his or her fluids will be restored with rest.”

3) *Apart from cases of abuse, can exercising mediumship in and of itself cause health problems?*

“There are times when it is prudent and even necessary to abstain from or at least moderate the use of mediumship. It

depends on the physical and mental state of the medium, who usually becomes aware of it. When the medium begins to feel fatigued, it is time to stop.”

4) *Might exercising the faculty present more problems for one individual than for another?*

“As I just said, it depends on the medium’s physical and mental state. There are persons who should avoid any cause of over-excitement, and the practice of mediumship would be one of them.” (See nos. 188 and 194)

5) *Can mediumship produce insanity?*

“No more than anything else could when mental weakness predisposes one to it. Mediumship will not produce insanity where the germ of insanity does not already exist. But if it does, it is easily recognized through the individual’s mental condition, and common sense tells us that we must take all the precautions necessary, for in such a case any disturbance would be harmful.”

6) *Could developing mediumship in children cause problems?*

“Certainly, and sustaining it could also be very dangerous, because such fragile and delicate organisms would be very disturbed and their infantile imaginations too over-excited. Thus, prudent parents will keep these ideas away from them, or at least they will speak to them regarding their possible consequences from the mental point of view.”

7) *Nonetheless, there are children who are natural mediums, whether of physical effects, writing or visions. Is the same danger involved in these cases?*

“No. When the faculty manifests spontaneously in children, it belongs to their nature and their constitution is adequate. The same does not apply when mediumship is artificially caused and induced. You may notice that children who have visions are usually little concerned about them; visions seem very natural, so they pay little attention to them and almost always forget about them. Later

on, however, the remembrance returns and is easily explained if they understand Spiritism.”

8) *At what age may mediumship be practiced without causing problems?*

“There is no precise age limit. It depends entirely on physical development and more particularly on psychological development. There are children of twelve years who would be less impressionable than some already-developed individuals. I am referring to mediumship in general, since physical effects mediumship is more fatiguing to the body. As for writing, there is another problem in that children lack experience, and also they may want to practice it alone or make a game of it.”

222. As we shall soon see, the practice of Spiritism requires much tact in order to undo the ruses of deceptive spirits. If adults are deceived by them, children and youths are even more exposed to them due to their inexperience. We also know that meditation is an essential condition, without which we cannot address serious spirits. Evocations made carelessly or for purposes of entertainment comprise a true profanation, and as such they open the door to mocking or malevolent spirits. Since we cannot expect the necessary seriousness for such an act from children, we should fear that if left to themselves they might transform it into a game. Even under the most favorable conditions we must hope that children gifted with mediumship will only exercise it under the supervision of experienced individuals, who, through their own example, will teach them the respect due to the souls of those who used to be of this world. Therefore, we see that the problem of age is subordinate both to the conditions of temperament and character. Nevertheless, what the above responses clearly emphasize is that we must not force the development of the mediumistic faculty in children when it is not spontaneous, and that in all cases it is necessary to utilize it only with great

circumspection, and never elicit or encourage its practice by frail individuals. We must use all available means to keep mediumistic practice away from those who show the least sign of eccentricity in their ideas or weakness in their mental faculties, for they are obviously predisposed to insanity, which any over-exciting cause may develop. In this respect, Spiritist ideas have no more influence than others, but should insanity manifest itself, it will take on the character of the dominant preoccupation just as it would take on a religious character in persons who hand themselves over to excess in devotional practices, but the responsibility would be attributed to Spiritism. The best thing to do with any persons who display a tendency toward an *idée fixe* is to steer their preoccupations in another direction in order to provide rest to their weakened organs.

In this matter, we would call the attention of our readers to section XII of the Introduction to *The Spirits' Book*.

CHAPTER XIX



The Role of Mediums in Communications

- The Influence of the Medium's Spirit • The Theory of Inert Mediums • The Aptitude of Certain Mediums for Things They Do Not Know: Languages, Music, Drawing, etc. • A Spirit's Dissertation on the Role of Mediums

The Influence of the Medium's Spirit

223. 1) *During the time in which they exercise their faculty, are mediums in a perfectly normal state?*

"Sometimes they are in a state of crisis that is more defined or less so. This is what fatigues them and why rest is necessary. But most of the time their state is not otherwise than normal, especially where writing mediums are involved."

2) *Can written or verbal communications also come from the medium's own spirit?*

“The medium’s soul can communicate like any other. If it enjoys a certain degree of liberty, it recovers its qualities as a spirit. You have proof of this when you are visited by the souls of living persons, who communicate with you through writing, often without having been called. You should realize that among the spirits you evoke there are those who are still incarnated on the earth. *In these instances, they speak with you as spirits and not as human beings.* Why couldn’t the medium’s own spirit do the same?”

– *Doesn’t this explanation seem to confirm the opinion of those who believe that all communications emanate from the medium’s own spirit rather than from another?*

“They are mistaken in understanding that their opinion is absolute. The medium’s spirit can certainly act on its own, but this is no reason for other spirits not to be equally able to act through the medium’s intermediation.”

3) *How can we tell if the spirit who responds is that of the medium or if it is another spirit?*

“By the nature of the communication. Study the circumstances and language and you will be able to tell. The medium’s spirit manifests especially in the somnambulistic or ecstatic state because that is when it is freest, but in the normal state it is more difficult. Moreover, there are responses that could not possibly be attributed to the medium’s own spirit. That is why I have told you to observe and study.”

When persons are speaking to us, it is easy to distinguish between what actually originates from them and what they are only repeating. The same applies to spirits.

4) *Since the medium’s spirit could have acquired knowledge in previous existences, which it has forgotten in its present body, but which it remembers as a spirit, couldn’t it draw from deep inside itself the ideas that seem to go beyond the reach of its present education?*

“This often happens in cases of somnambulistic or ecstatic trance, but there are still circumstances that allow for no doubt – study the matter *in depth* and meditate.”

5) *Are the communications of the medium's own spirit always inferior to those that may be attributed to other spirits?*

“Always, no, since the communicating spirit can be of a lower order than that of the medium, in which case it will speak less sensibly. This may be seen during somnambulism because that is when the somnambulist's spirit frequently manifests; however, it will often give very good information nonetheless.”

6) *Does the communicating spirit transmit its thought directly or does it use the medium's incarnate spirit as an intermediary?*

“The medium's spirit is the interpreter because it is connected to the body which serves for the communication, and because this link between you and the communicating spirits is necessary, just as an electric wire is necessary for transmitting news over a distance, and an intelligent person is necessary on either end of the wire to receive and communicate.

7) *Does the medium's spirit influence the communications that it must transmit from other spirits?*

“Yes, because if there is no affinity between them, the medium's spirit could alter the responses by adapting them to its own ideas and tendencies, *but it does not exert any influence on the communicating spirits themselves*; it is merely a bad interpreter.”

8) *Is that why certain spirits prefer certain mediums?*

“There is no other reason. They look for the interpreter who best sympathizes with them and transmits their thought most precisely. If there is no sympathy between them, the medium's spirit will be antagonistic and will put up resistance, making itself an unwilling and, almost always, unfaithful interpreter. You yourselves experience the same thing when the ideas of a scholar are transmitted by a foolish or dishonest person.”

9) *We can understand how this might be true of intuitive mediums, but not when we are dealing with mechanical mediums.*

“You do not understand the medium’s role very well. There is a law that still escapes you. Remember that in order to produce the movement of an inert object the spirit requires a portion of the medium’s animalized fluid, which it uses to momentarily animate a table, for example making it obey its will. Very well, for an intelligent communication it also needs an intelligent intermediary, and this intermediary is the medium’s spirit.”

– *This does not seem to apply to what we call ‘talking tables’, because when they and other ‘inert objects’, such as planchettes and baskets, respond intelligently, it appears that the medium’s spirit does not participate in any way.*

“That is a mistake. A spirit can give momentary fictitious life to an inert object, but not intelligence. An inert object has never had intelligence. It is therefore the medium’s spirit who receives the thought without realizing it and transmits it little by little with the help of various intermediaries.”

10) *Do these explanations imply that the spirit of the medium is never completely passive?*

“It is passive when it does not mix its own ideas with those of the communicating spirit, but it is never completely nullified. Its cooperation is indispensable as an intermediary, even in so-called mechanical mediums.”

11) *Isn’t there a greater guarantee of independence in the mechanical medium than in the intuitive medium?*

“Without a doubt, and for some communications a mechanical medium is preferable. When we are familiar with the faculties of a particular intuitive medium, however, and depending on the circumstances, it does not matter. I mean that certain communications require less precision.”

The Theory of Inert Mediums

12) *Among the different theories proposed to explain spirit phenomena, there is one that presumes that there is true mediumship in inert objects; for example, in the basket or cardboard box that serves as the instrument. The communicating spirit would identify itself with the object and render it not only living but also intelligent, which has given rise to the designation 'inert mediums' to such objects. What is your opinion?*

"I only need to state the following: if the spirit were to transmit intelligence to the box and give it life, the box would be able to write by itself without the medium's support. It would be as strange for an intelligent person to become a machine as for an inert object to become intelligent. This is one of the many theories derived from preconceived ideas, and which will crumble in the light of experience and observation."

13) *A well-known phenomenon seems to make acceptable the idea that there is in inert animated objects more than just life – perhaps even intelligence. It is the phenomenon of tables, baskets, etc. expressing anger or affection in their movements.*

"When an angry man shakes a stick, it is not the stick that is angry or even the hand that is holding it, but rather the thought that directs the hand. Tables and baskets are no more intelligent than a stick. They have no intelligent sentiment but obey an intelligence. In other words, a spirit neither transforms itself into a basket nor chooses to dwell in it."

14) *If it is unreasonable to attribute intelligence to these objects, could we nevertheless regard them as a variety of medium and designate them as 'inert mediums'?*

"That is a matter of words, which mean little to us, provided you yourselves understand what you mean by them. You are free to call a puppet a man.

The Aptitude of Certain Mediums for Things They Do Not Know: Languages, Music, Drawing, etc.

15) *Spirits only have the language of thought, not articulated speech; therefore, they use only one language. Thus, a spirit could express itself mediumistically in a language it had never spoken when incarnate. In this case, where does it get the words it uses?*

“You already answered this question by yourself when you said that spirits only have one language, which is that of thought. Everyone understands this language – both humans and spirits. When addressing the incarnate spirit of the medium, the discarnate spirit does not speak in French or English, but in the universal language of thought. In order to translate its ideas into articulated, transmissible language, it utilizes the vocabulary of the medium.”

16) *If that is so, spirits would only express themselves in the medium's language, but we know that they write in languages that are unknown to the medium. Isn't that a contradiction?*

“First, you should realize that not all mediums are equally adept at this type of exercise. Second, spirits only lend themselves to it occasionally when they deem it to be useful. For normal, lengthy communications they prefer to use a language that is familiar to the medium because it presents them with fewer material difficulties to overcome.”

17) *Doesn't the ability of certain mediums to write in a foreign language prove the fact that they had spoken it in another lifetime and have intuitively retained it in the present one?*

“That could certainly be the case, but it is not the rule. With some effort, a spirit can temporarily overcome material resistance, which can be verified when mediums write in their own language using words unknown to them.”

18) *Could a person who does not even know how to write do so as a medium?*

“Yes, but you must understand that there is a great mechanical difficulty to overcome, because the hand is not used to the movements required to form letters. The same applies to painting mediums, who do not know how to draw.”

19) *Could a medium of very low intelligence transmit communications of an elevated order?*

“Yes, for the same reason that a medium can write in an unknown language. Mediumship per se does not depend on intelligence or moral qualities. In the absence of a better instrument, a spirit can use whatever one is at hand. However, for communications of a certain order it is natural that it will prefer the medium who offers it the fewest material obstacles. There is a further consideration: mentally impaired individuals are only so because of the imperfection of their brain, since their spirit may be more advanced than one might think. You have proof of this through some evocations of living and dead mentally impaired persons.”

This is a fact borne out by experience. Many times we have evoked the spirits of living mentally impaired individuals, who provided patent proof of their identity and answered us in a very sane and even superior manner. Their impaired state is a punishment for the spirit, who suffers because of the constraint under which it finds itself. Mentally impaired mediums can thus sometimes offer a spirit who wants to manifest greater resources than one might think. (See *Revue Spirite*, July 1860, article on *Phrénologie* and on *Physiognomonie*).

20) *How can we explain the aptitude of certain mediums to write in verse in spite of their poetic ignorance?*

“Poetry is a language in itself. They can write in verse, just as they could write in an unknown language. Furthermore, they could have been poets in a previous existence. As I have already

stated, acquired knowledge is never lost by spirits, who must reach perfection in all areas. Thus, without their realizing it, what they knew in the past provides them an ease that they do not possess in the normal state.”

21) *Does the same apply to those who display a special aptitude for drawing and music?*

“Yes. *Drawing* and music are also forms for expressing thought and spirits use instruments that offer them the most ease.”

22) *Does the expression of thought through poetry, drawing or music depend solely on the aptitude of the medium or also on that of the communicating spirit?*

“Sometimes, the medium; sometimes, the spirit. Highly evolved spirits possess all aptitudes, whereas less evolved ones have limited knowledge.”

23) *Why do individuals who were gifted with a great talent in one existence not possess it in the next one?*

“That is not always the case, for often such individuals perfect in one existence what they had begun in the previous one. Nonetheless, it could be that a superior faculty lies dormant for a certain amount of time in order to facilitate the development of another. It will be a latent seed that will later germinate again, but there will always be some visible signs of it or at least a vague intuition.”

224. Undoubtedly, a communicating spirit understands all languages because they are forms for expressing thought, and the spirit understands through thought. In order to transmit this thought, however, it requires an instrument – the medium. The medium’s soul, who receives the spirit’s communication, can only transmit it through the bodily organs; thus, for transmitting in an unknown language, these organs do not have the flexibility they possess for the familiar language. A medium who only knows how to speak in French could accidentally give a response in English,

for example, if the spirit so wills. However, spirits, who find human language already too slow in comparison to the speed of thought – and therefore they try to abbreviate a language as much as possible – become impatient with the mechanical resistance of the transmission, and that is why they do not always attempt it. This is also the reason why novice mediums, who write painfully and slowly even in their own language, usually only receive brief responses that are not fully developed. This is also why spirits recommend that only simple questions be asked by such novices. For farther reaching questions, a developed medium is required, who offers no mechanical resistance to the spirit. We would not choose a student who was just learning to spell to read a text for us. A good worker does not like to use low quality instruments.

Let us add another highly important consideration regarding foreign languages. Endeavors in this area are always done out of curiosity with the purpose of experimentation, and nothing is more unpleasant to spirits than the proofs to which some individuals try to submit them. Highly evolved spirits never lend themselves to this and they depart from those who intend to enter onto such a path. They love serious and useful subjects as much as they loathe concerning themselves with useless and purposeless ones. Disbelievers will say that this is nevertheless a useful aim for convincing them in that it could result in winning adherents for the cause of the Spirits. In response the Spirits state: “Our cause does not need those who are so proud as to deem themselves indispensable. We call to ourselves *those whom we want* and who are always the humblest and most unassuming. Did Jesus perform wonders for the scribes when they asked him to? And what kind of individuals did he use to revolutionize the world? If you want to convince yourselves, you have other means than through demands. Start by submitting yourselves to the facts: it is not normal for students to impose their will upon their master.”

The result of this is that, except for a few exceptions, mediums transmit spirits' thoughts through the available mechanical means, and the expression of this thought could and should be often affected by the imperfection of such means. Thus, uncultured individuals will say the most beautiful things and express the most elevated and philosophical thoughts in an uncultured manner, for as we know, for spirits the thought means more than everything else. This answers the objections of certain critics as to incorrectness of style and spelling, which they would blame the spirits for, but which could be attributed to either the mediums themselves or the spirits. It is not worthwhile to dwell on such matters, and it is no less childish to want to point out such incorrectness with minute precision, as we have sometimes witnessed. We should correct it without any scruples unless it is characteristic of the communicating spirit, in which case it will be useful to retain as proof of identity. Hence, for example, we have seen a spirit always write *Jule* (lacking the 's') when referring to its grandson because during its lifetime, it wrote it like that, although the grandson, who served as its medium, knew perfectly well how to spell his own name.

A Spirit's Dissertation on the Role of Mediums

225. The following dissertation, given spontaneously by a high order spirit who revealed itself through highly sublime communications, clearly and completely summarizes the issue of the medium's role:

“Whatever may be the nature of writing mediums, whether mechanical, semi-mechanical or simply intuitive, our procedures for communicating through them do not vary essentially. Actually, our communications with incarnate spirits, as well as spirits per se, occur solely by the radiation of our thought.

“Our thoughts do not have to be clothed in words in order for spirits to understand them. All spirits perceive the thought that we want to transmit to them by the simple fact that we direct it to them, and this according to the degree of their intellectual faculties. This means that a specific thought can be comprehended by some, according to their respective advancement, whereas for others the same thought will not be perceptible, as it awakens no memory or understanding in the depths of their hearts or minds. In such a case, the incarnate spirit, who acts as our medium, is more appropriate for transmitting our thought to other incarnates – even though it does not understand the thought – something a discarnate but less evolved spirit could not do if we depended on its mediation. This is because the earth-bound being gives its body as an instrument at our disposal, which the discarnate spirit cannot do.

“Thus, whenever we find mediums whose minds are full of knowledge acquired during their present lifetime, and whose spirits are rich in previously-acquired, latent knowledge proper for facilitating our communications, we will prefer to employ them, for then the phenomenon of the communication will be much easier for us than through mediums of limited intelligence and whose previously-acquired knowledge is insufficient. We will try to make ourselves better understood through some clear and precise explanations.

“With mediums whose current or previously-acquired intelligence is developed, our thought is communicated instantly, spirit to spirit, through a faculty inherent in the essence of the spirit itself. In this case, we find the appropriate elements in these mediums’ minds for clothing our thought with the corresponding words, whether these mediums are intuitive, semi-mechanical or entirely mechanical. That is why that in spite of several spirits communicating through the same medium, the data received from them always bears the personal stamp of the medium both

in form and style, because although the thought is not exclusively the medium's own, or the topic is not part of his or her customary concerns, and even though what we want to say does not derive from him or her in any way, the medium does not cease to exert a personal influence on the form by giving it individualized qualities and properties. It is precisely like when you look at several places through tinted lenses – green, white, or blue. Although the places and objects are entirely different and totally independent from one another, they nonetheless always appear with the coloration given to them by the various lenses. A better example: let us compare mediums to those glass bottles that are filled with colored and transparent liquids and that may be seen in drugstores. Well then, we are like luminous focal points shining on certain moral, philosophical and psychological inner scenes, illuminating them through blue, green or red mediums in such a way that our luminous rays take on their colorations. In other words, our rays must pass through glass that varies in degrees of cut and transparency, which means mediums with different degrees of intelligence. Our rays only reach those objects that we want to illuminate by taking on the coloration or personal style of these mediums. Finally, to finish with one more comparison: we spirits are like musical composers who have composed or would like to improvise on an air and have only one of these instruments at our disposal: a piano, a violin, a flute, bassoon or a ten-cent whistle. There is no doubt that with the piano, the flute or the violin, we will play our piece satisfactorily to our listeners. Even though the sound of the piano, bassoon or flute is each essentially different for each instrument, our composition will always be the same one in spite of the differences in sound. However, if we only have the ten-cent whistle at our disposal, we would run into difficulties.

“In fact, when we have to use little-advanced mediums, our work becomes slower and tedious because we must resort to

incomplete forms of expression, which is an impediment to us. We are then forced to break down our thoughts and dictate word by word, letter by letter, which is tiring and fatiguing to us, and comprises a real restraint on the promptness and development of our manifestations.

“That is why we feel fortunate to find mediums well prepared, sufficiently equipped and furnished with mental elements that can be quickly utilized; in other words, good instruments, for then our perispirit, acting upon the perispirit of whomever we *mediumize*, only has to give impulse to the hand, which serves as a pen or pencil holder. With badly equipped mediums, we are obliged to perform a work similar to when we have to communicate by means of raps, that is, letter by letter, word by word in order to form the sentences that translate the thought to be transmitted.

“This is the reason why we prefer enlightened and educated classes of individuals to divulge Spiritism and develop writing mediumship, although in such classes we also encounter the most incredulous, rebellious and morally depraved individuals. It is also the reason why if nowadays we allow little-advanced spirits to transmit tangible communications through raps and apparitions, the least serious persons among you also prefer phenomena that touch their eyes and ears to those of a purely spiritual and psychological nature.

“Whenever we want to dictate spontaneous messages, we act upon the mind, the mediums’ archives, and we join our own material with the elements they provide us – all without them realizing it. It is as if we took the money from their pockets and arranged the coins in the order that seemed best to us.

“However, whenever mediums themselves want to question us through whatever means, it would be good for them to reflect seriously beforehand in order to ask us questions methodically, making our work of responding easier, because according to what

was stated in a previous instruction, your minds are frequently in inextricable disorder, making it difficult and tedious to move about in the maze of your thoughts. Whenever questions must be asked through a third party, it would be a good and appropriate idea to communicate them beforehand to the medium so that he or she may identify with the spirit to be questioned, becoming impregnated (so to speak) with its thoughts, for then we will find it much easier to respond thanks to the affinity between our perispirit and that of the medium who is to serve as our interpreter.

“Of course, we can discuss mathematics through a medium that is completely unfamiliar with the subject, but almost always the spirit of the medium possesses such knowledge in a latent state; that is, knowledge that is personal to the fluidic being and not to the incarnate being, since the current body is an inadequate or rebellious instrument for this type of knowledge. The same applies to astronomy, poetry, medicine and various languages, and with all the other knowledge peculiar to the human species. Finally, we still have the tedious task of preparation applied to mediums that are completely unfamiliar with the subject under consideration, which is that of putting the letters and words together as is done in typesetting.

“As we have already stated, spirits do not need to clothe their thoughts in words. They perceive and transmit them naturally amongst themselves. Incarnate beings, on the contrary, can only communicate through thought translated into words. While letters, words, nouns, verbs and sentences are required for your perception, even mentally, no visible or tangible form is required for us.”

Erastus and Timothy

This analysis of the role of mediums and the processes through which they communicate is both clear and logical. From it we may derive the principle that a spirit does not utilize *the*

ideas of the medium, but rather the necessary materials present in the medium's mind for expressing its own thoughts, and that the richer the mind, the easier the communication becomes. When a spirit expresses itself in a language familiar to the medium, it finds the words already formed and ready for the translation of its ideas. If it communicates in a foreign language, it does not have words at its disposal but only letters. It is then that the spirit is obligated to dictate letter by letter, exactly as if we wanted to make a person who did not know even a word of it to write in German. If the medium did not know how to read or write, not even letters would be at the spirit's disposal. Then, the spirit must guide the hand as one would do with a child. In such a case there is a material difficulty that is even harder to overcome. These phenomena are possible and we have numerous examples of them. However, it should be understood that this manner of proceeding does not lend itself to lengthy and rapid communications, for which spirits must prefer the easiest instruments possible, or, as they themselves have said, well-equipped mediums from their point of view.

If those who request such phenomena in order to be convinced had attempted to study the theory first, they would know about the special conditions under which they are produced.

CHAPTER XX



The Medium's Moral Influence

• Various Questions • A Spirit's Dissertation
concerning Moral Influence

Various Questions

226. 1) *Does the development of mediumship have any relation to the medium's moral development?*

"No. The faculty per se is organic and therefore independent of morality. However, the same does not apply concerning its use, which can be good or bad according to the medium's character."

2) *It has always been said that mediumship is a gift from God, a grace, a divine favor. Then, why isn't it a privilege of moral individuals only? And why are there unworthy persons who are endowed with it to the highest degree but who use it badly?*

"All our faculties are favors for which we should thank God, for there are some persons who do not possess them. You could just as well ask why God has given good eyesight to criminals, dexterity to thieves, or eloquence to those who only use it for evil.

The same applies to mediumship: unworthy individuals have been endowed with it because they need it more than others in order to better themselves. Do you think that God refuses the means of salvation to the guilty? Instead, he multiplies such means at every step by *placing them right in their hands*. It is their responsibility to take advantage of them, however. Didn't the traitor Judas perform wonders and cure diseases as a disciple? God provided him with this gift so that he might afterwards see more clearly the odiousness of his betrayal.

3) *Will mediums who put their faculties to bad use, who do not utilize them for the good, or who do not take advantage of them for their own education suffer the consequences?*

"If they put them to bad use, they will be doubly punished since they will have lost the opportunity to profit from a way of enlightening themselves. A person who sees clearly and stumbles anyway is more culpable than someone who is blind and falls into a ditch."

4) *There are mediums who quite often receive spontaneous communications that are about the same subject, addressing certain moral questions, for example, related to certain defects. Is there some purpose for this?*

"Yes, and the purpose is to enlighten them concerning a constantly-repeated subject or to correct them of certain defects. This is why spirits always speak to some about pride and others about charity, for only persistence will finally succeed in opening their eyes. There are no mediums who misuse their ability out of ambition or self-interest, or who disgrace it with some essential defect such as selfishness, pride or frivolousness, who do not time and again receive warnings from spirits. Most of the time, unfortunately, they do not apply such warnings to themselves.

Spirits nearly always give their lessons in a reserved indirect way in order to allow for greater merit to those who know how

to apply and take advantage of them. However, some persons are so blind and proud that they do not recognize themselves in the picture they have right in front of them. Furthermore, if a spirit gives them to understand that they themselves are the subject of the lesson, they become angry and call the spirit a liar or a joker – enough to prove that the spirit is correct.

5) *When they receive general lessons with no personal application, don't mediums act as passive instruments to serve for the instruction of others?*

“Almost always such warnings and advice are not directed toward them, but to others whom we can only reach through their mediumship. Nonetheless, mediums should try to profit from them themselves unless they are blinded with vanity.

“Don't think that mediumship is given only to correct one or two individuals; rather, the objective is greater: it is meant for all humankind. As individuals, mediums are very unimportant instruments. Thus, when we provide instructions of general interest, we utilize mediums who offer us the required abilities, but you can be very sure that the time will come when good mediums will be quite common and good spirits will no longer have to use faulty instruments.”

6) *If a medium's moral qualities repel less evolved spirits, why do mediums gifted with good qualities transmit erroneous or even crass responses?*

“Do you know all the secrets of their soul? Besides, without being nasty they can be irresponsible and frivolous instead, and they could also be in need of a lesson in order to warn them.”

7) *Why do highly evolved spirits allow persons who are gifted with great mediumship abilities, and who could do a great deal of good, to become instruments of error?*

“Such spirits try to influence them, but when these individuals allow themselves to be drawn onto a path of error, they

do not stop them. That is why they use them so reluctantly, for *the truth cannot be interpreted with a lie.*”

8) *Is it completely impossible to receive good communications through an imperfect medium?*

“Imperfect mediums can sometimes obtain good communications since, if they have a good faculty, good spirits can use them in the absence of better ones in special circumstances. They do so only temporarily, however, because when they find others who would serve them better, they prefer them.”

We should point out that when good spirits see that certain mediums cease to be good instruments, and due to their imperfections, start to become prey to deceptive spirits, they nearly always bring about circumstances that reveal their defects and they keep them away from serious, well-intentioned persons, whose good faith might be abused by them. In such cases, whatever their faculties may be, there is nothing to be sorry about.

9) *What are the qualities of mediums whom we could regard as perfect?*

“Perfect? Alas! You know very well that there is no perfection on the face of the earth. If such were not so, you would not be there. Thus, we say ‘good’ mediums, instead, and that is saying much, for they are rare indeed. Perfect mediums would be those whom evil spirits would never *dare* to try to deceive. However, the best ones are those who are attuned solely to good spirits, and who allow themselves to be deceived the least.”

10) *If they are attuned solely to good spirits, why do these spirits allow them to be deceived?*

“Good spirits allow the best mediums to be deceived sometimes so that they can exercise their judgment and learn to discern truth from falsehood. Besides, no matter how good mediums may be, they are never so perfect that they do not have

a weak side that can expose them to being attacked. Such should serve them as a lesson. The erroneous communications they receive from time to time are warnings for them to avoid deeming themselves infallible and becoming proud, because mediums who receive the most noteworthy communications cannot be any more proud of themselves than an organ-grinder, who only has to turn the crank in order to produce beautiful tunes.”

11) *What conditions are necessary so that the word of highly evolved spirits comes to us without any alteration?*

“Desire only what is good and avoid *selfishness* and *pride*: both conditions are necessary.”

12) *If the word of high order spirits cannot come to us in its purest form except under such difficult conditions, isn't it an obstacle to spreading the truth?*

“No. The light always comes to those who desire to receive it. Those who desire enlightenment must run from darkness, and darkness is to be found in the impurity of the heart.

“Spirits whom you consider as personifications of morality do not willingly answer those who have a heart stained with pride, greed and a lack of charity.

“Therefore, let those who desire enlightenment free themselves of all human vanity and humble their reason before the infinite power of the Creator. This will be the best proof of their sincerity; all are able to fulfill this condition.”

227. Even though mediums are merely instruments with regards to execution, they nevertheless exert a large moral influence because communicating spirits identify with the medium's spirit, and for this identification there must be sympathy between them – we might even say an *affinity*. The soul exerts a kind of attraction or repulsion upon the communicating spirit according to the degree of similarity or dissimilarity between them. Thus, good souls have affinity with good spirits, and bad souls have affinity

with bad spirits, from which it follows that the moral qualities of mediums have a capital influence upon the nature of the spirits who communicate through their intermediation. If mediums are morally lacking, less evolved spirits huddle around them and are always ready to take the place of the good spirits the mediums try to contact. The qualities that attract the preference of good spirits are: goodness, benevolence, simplicity of heart, love for one's neighbor and detachment from material things. The defects that repel them are: pride, selfishness, envy, jealousy, hate, greed, sensuality and all the passions that keep humans attached to matter.

228. All moral imperfections are open doors for evil spirits, but the one they most easily exploit is pride because pride is the one that people least often confess about themselves. Pride has led to the loss of many mediums gifted with the most beautiful faculties and who, without pride, would have been remarkable and highly useful instruments. As they became prey to deceiving spirits, their faculties were at first twisted and then destroyed, and many saw themselves humiliated by the bitterest disappointments.

Pride expresses itself in mediums through unmistakable signs that must be brought to light, for it is one of the elements that must arouse distrust concerning the veracity of their communications. It starts with a blind confidence in the superiority of the communications and in the infallibility of the spirit who transmits them. This causes a certain disdain for everything that does not proceed from only them, since they deem themselves privileged with the truth. The prestige of the great names, with which spirits who say that they are their protectors adorn themselves, dazzles them, and since their vanity would suffer if they had to confess that they had been duped, they reject every type of counsel and even avoid it altogether, shunning friends and anyone else who might possibly be able to open their eyes. Even if they were to agree to listen to such persons, they would not assign any

importance to their warnings, for to doubt the superiority of their guiding spirit would almost be blasphemy. They are upset by the least disagreement, by the slightest critical observation, and they sometimes end up by even hating the persons who have tried to be of help to them. Due to the isolation caused by the spirits, who do not wish to be contradicted, these same spirits do everything they can to entertain these mediums' delusions by leading them to naively regard the most absurd matters as being sublime. Therefore, blind trust in the superiority of the communications they receive, disdain for those that do not come through their intermediation, unreflective regard for grand names, rejection of counsel, distrust of any criticism, avoidance of those who can provide disinterested opinions and confidence in their own skill despite their lack of experience – these are the characteristics of proud mediums.

We must remember that pride is almost always aroused in mediums by those who surround them. If they are endowed with slightly transcendental abilities, they are sought out and praised, and they end up deeming themselves to be indispensable. Soon, they put on airs of importance and disdain when they lend their services. We have more than once lamented the praise heaped on some mediums with the intention of encouraging them.

229. On the other side of the coin, let us emphasize the picture of mediums who are truly moral, in whom we can trust completely. First, let us suppose an ease of performance sufficiently great to enable spirits to communicate freely without the burden of any material difficulty. Having done so, the most important thing to consider is the nature of the spirits who customarily assist them, and for this we must pay more attention to their language than the names they assume. They must never forget that the affinity gained among good spirits will always be in proportion to the efforts they make to repel the evil ones. Convinced that their ability is a gift that has been granted to

them for good purposes, they will never take advantage of it or attribute any merit to themselves for possessing it. They accept the good communications received as a blessing, and they should put forth every effort to render themselves worthy of them through goodness, benevolence and modesty. The former group of mediums pride themselves in their relations with so-called superior spirits; the latter humble themselves by always regarding themselves as unworthy of such a favor.

A Spirit's Dissertation concerning Moral Influence

230. The following instruction on the subject was given to us by a Spirit whose many communications we have already reproduced:

“As I have already said: mediums in and of themselves exert a secondary influence in spirit communications. Their role is like that of an electric telegraph machine transmitting dispatches between two distant places on the earth. Thus, when we want to dictate a message, we act upon the medium like a telegraph operator acts upon the apparatus; i.e. in the same way that the *tick-tack* of the telegraph will trace the reproduced signals of the dispatch upon a strip of paper thousands of miles away, we also communicate what we want to teach you across the immeasurable distances that separate the visible and invisible, the immaterial and incarnate worlds, by means of a mediumistic apparatus. However, just as atmospheric conditions often act upon and disturb telegraphic transmissions, the medium's moral influence sometimes acts upon and disturbs the transmission of our dispatches from beyond the grave, for we are then obliged to send them through an environment which opposes them. Most of the

time, though, this influence is nevertheless nullified by our energy and will, and no disturbance occurs. As a matter of fact, dictations of elevated philosophical reach and communications of perfect morality are sometimes transmitted through mediums who seem hardly appropriate for such superior instructions, whereas, on the other hand, communications that are hardly edifying sometimes arrive through mediums who are ashamed of having served to transmit them.

“We may affirm, as a general rule, that similar spirits attract each other, and that groups of highly evolved spirits rarely communicate through bad conductors when they have good mediumistic apparatuses at their disposal; in other words, good mediums.

“Frivolous, little-serious mediums therefore summon spirits of the same nature and that is why their communications are characterized by banality, frivolousness, truncated ideas, and are nearly always very heterodoxical, spiritually speaking. Of course, they can and sometimes do say good things, but it is precisely in such cases that one must submit them to a severe and scrupulous examination, because in the midst of good things, certain hypocritical spirits skillfully and calculatedly insinuate imagined facts and lying assertions for the purpose of deceiving good faith listeners. Every equivocal word and sentence must then be eliminated without mercy, retaining only what logic approves or what the Doctrine has already taught. Communications of this nature only threaten isolated Spiritists and recently-formed or unenlightened groups, because in meetings of more advanced and experienced adherents it is futile for the crow to adorn itself with peacock feathers since it will always be mercilessly exposed.

“I will not speak of mediums who enjoy soliciting and receiving obscene communications. Leave them to take pleasure in the fellowship of cynical spirits. Besides, communications of this

type require solitude and isolation. In any case, they could never provoke anything but disdain and repugnance among members of philosophical and serious groups. However, where mediums' moral influence truly makes itself felt is when they substitute their own personal ideas for those that spirits attempt to suggest through them, and it is felt even more when they draw delusional theories from their own imaginations, which they naively deem to have resulted from an intuitive communication. In this case, there are a thousand chances to one that it represents nothing more than a reflection of their own personal spirit. A curious occurrence is when the medium's hand sometimes moves mechanically under the impulsion of a secondary or mocking spirit. This is the touch-stone against which ardent imaginations fall because led by the ardor of their own ideas and by the artifice of their literary knowledge, these mediums despise the modest dictation of a wise spirit, and forsaking the prey to hunt the shadow, they replace it with puffed up paraphrase. Another pitfall that these ambitious personalities fall prey to is when, in the absence of the communications that good spirits refuse them, they present their own works as having come from them. Thus, it is necessary that the leaders of groups be gifted with refined tact and rare sagacity in order to discern authentic communications from those which are not, and at the same time not harm those mediums who have allowed themselves to be deluded.

“‘When in doubt, abstain’, states one of your ancient proverbs. Thus, accept only what is backed by indisputable evidence. Whenever a new opinion appears that seems the least bit doubtful, pass it through the sieve of reason and logic. Whatever reason and common sense reprove, fearlessly reject it. It is better to reject ten truths than to accept one single lie. In fact, upon that one erroneous theory you could build an entire system, which would crumble under the first breath of truth like a monument

constructed on quicksand, whereas if you reject certain truths today because they are not clear or logical to you, a shocking fact or an irrefutable demonstration will soon come to you to affirm their authenticity.

“Nonetheless, O Spiritists, remember that nothing is impossible for God and for good spirits, except injustice and inequality.

“Spiritism has already spread extensively among humankind and has already sufficiently moralized the sincere followers of its Doctrine, so that the Spirits no longer feel obligated to utilize bad instruments or imperfect mediums. Now if mediums, whoever they may be, become the object of suspicion due to their conduct, their habits, their pride, or their lack of love and charity, reject their communications – there is a serpent hiding in the grass. Thus is my conclusion concerning the moral influence of mediums.”

Erastus



The Influence of the Surroundings

231. 1) *Do the surroundings in which mediums work exert any influence on the manifestations?*

“All the spirits who surround mediums help them either for good or evil.

2) *Can't high order spirits overcome the ill will of incarnate spirits who serve as their interpreters, and also overcome the ill will of other spirits around them?*

“Yes, whenever they deem it useful to do so, and according to the intent of the person who addresses them. We have already said: highly evolved spirits can sometimes communicate to provide special assistance despite the imperfection of the medium and the surroundings, but then they remain completely outside such surroundings.”

3) *Do high order spirits attempt to bring frivolous meetings back to the field of more serious ideas?*

“High order spirits do not attend meetings in which their presence would be futile. However, they willingly go to surroundings where there has been little instruction, but where

there is true sincerity even if they only find deficient instruments there; however, they do not go to intellectual environments in which sarcasm reigns. In such cases, it is necessary to impact eyes and ears – the role of rapping and mocking spirits. It is fitting that those who pride themselves on their knowledge be humiliated by spirits who are less knowledgeable and less advanced.”

4) *Are low order spirits forbidden from taking part in serious meetings?*

“No. Sometimes they are present at them in order to take advantage of the teachings that you receive, but they keep quiet *like ignorant listeners during a meeting of scholars.*”

232. It would be erroneous to believe it necessary to be a medium in order to attract the beings of the invisible world. They are everywhere; they are constantly around us, next to us; they watch and observe us, interfere in our meetings, and follow or avoid us, depending on whether we attract or repel them. The mediumistic faculty does not have any influence upon this; rather, it is simply a means of communication. According to what we have seen concerning the causes of sympathy and antipathy among spirits, we can easily understand that we are surrounded by those who have an affinity with our own spirit, that is, according to our advancement. If we would further consider the moral state of our globe, we would comprehend what kinds of spirits must predominate among discarnate spirits. If we were to regard each nation in particular, we would be able to discern which orders of spirits would be found in it by the dominant character of its citizens and the degree of their moral and *humanitarian* preoccupations and sentiments.

Using this as a starting point, let us imagine a meeting of frivolous and inconsequential individuals, who are solely interested in their own pleasures. What kinds of spirits would prefer to be amongst them? Surely not highly evolved ones, since

our own scholars and philosophers would not waste any of their time in such places. Hence, every time persons meet together there is amongst them a concealed assembly of spirits, who sympathize either with their good qualities or imperfections – *aside from all thoughts of evocation*. Now let us suppose that there is a possibility for these persons to communicate with beings from the invisible world through an interpreter, that is, a medium. Which spirits will respond to their call? Obviously, the ones who are already there, who are looking for nothing more than a favorable opportunity. If a high order spirit were evoked during a frivolous meeting, it might answer and even utter some sensible words like a good shepherd who comes to his wandering sheep. However, if it sees that it is being neither understood nor listened to, it will leave – as you would do it in its place – and the other spirits will have the field free for themselves.

233. A serious meeting is therefore not always sufficient for receiving elevated communications. There are individuals who never smile and yet their hearts could not be purer. More than anything else, it is the heart that attracts good spirits. No moral condition impedes spirit communications per se, but if our moral conditions are bad, we will communicate with those who are similar to us, who will not waste the opportunity to deceive us and who will almost always stimulate our prejudices.

We can thus see the enormous influence of the surroundings upon the nature of intelligent manifestations. However, this influence does not exert itself as some persons formerly thought it did when the spirit world was still unknown – unlike nowadays – and before the most decisive experiences had cleared up doubts about it. When the communications agree with the way that the participants normally see things, it is not because their opinions have been reflected in the spirit of the medium like in a mirror, but because the spirits are sympathetic with them, whether for

good or evil, and share in the same opinions. This is proven by the fact that if they could attract other spirits to communicate with them instead of those who customarily surround them, the same mediums would speak in much different styles and would say things quite removed from their normal opinions and convictions.

In sum, the conditions of the surroundings will be better as there is greater moral homogeneity for the good, purer and more elevated sentiments, and a more sincere desire to learn without preconceived ideas.



Mediumship in Animals

234. Can animals be mediums? This question has been frequently proposed, and certain facts appear to indicate an affirmative response. What have especially given a reason for accepting such a possibility are the noteworthy indications of intelligence in certain trained birds, which seem to guess people's thought in drawing from a pack of cards the ones corresponding precisely to the question posed. We have observed such experiments with special care, and what we have admired most is the skill that had to be developed in order to teach the birds in the first place.

We cannot deny that they possess a small dose of relative intelligence, and we must agree that in the circumstances alluded to, their perspicacity might surpass that of many humans because few persons could boast about being able to do what these birds do. It might even be necessary in a few cases to imagine that they possess a gift of second sight superior to that of the most lucid somnambulists. We know that lucidity is in fact essentially variable and is subject to frequent intermittences, whereas amongst these birds it appears to be permanent and functions with a regularity and precision that could never be found in any somnambulist. In other words, they would never lack it.

Most of the experiments that we have witnessed resemble those practiced by stage magicians, and we cannot help but doubt the means employed, particularly the way the cards are prepared. The art of stage magic consists in disguising the sleight-of-hand, without which the desired effect would not be achieved. However, even when the phenomenon of the birds is reduced to such proportions, it is no less interesting, because we would nevertheless have to admire both the talent of the trainer and the intelligence of the student since the difficulties to overcome are much greater than if the bird could only act by employing its own faculties. Managing to enable the bird to do things that exceed the limits of what is possible for human intelligence proves, by its very nature, the use of some secret process. Moreover, it is indisputable that the birds only acquired such a degree of skill after some time of special and persevering care, which would not be necessary if their natural intelligence had been sufficient to produce the same results. It is no more extraordinary to train them to pull cards from a deck than to accustom them to singing or repeating certain words. The same applies when a stage magician wants to imitate second sight: he or she takes the individual, who is under his or her influence, to the extreme so that the illusion may be more lasting. Ever since the first time we watched a session of that kind, we have seen nothing more than a very imperfect imitation of somnambulism, which revealed an ignorance of the most essential conditions of that faculty.

235. In any case, the above experiments leave the principal question intact, for even though somnambulism can be imitated, that does not negate the actual existence of the faculty, and the imitation of mediumship in the birds proves nothing against the possibility of a similar faculty in them or in other animals. Therefore, what we must determine is whether or not animals are as capable as humans to serve as intermediaries for spirits and their intelligent communications. It would at first seem logical to suppose that a

living being that is gifted with a certain degree of intelligence would be more appropriate for such effects than an inert, lifeless object – a table, for example. However, such is not the case.

A Spirit's Dissertation on the Issue

236. The issue of mediumship in animals is fully resolved in the following dissertation given by one of the Spirits, whose profundity and sagacity may be appreciated in the many quotations that we have already cited. To better appreciate the value of his comments, it is essential that we recall his previous explanation in no. 225 above concerning the role of mediums in the transmission of communications.

The following communication was given at the Parisian Society for Spiritist Studies following a discussion on the matter.

“Today I shall address the issue of mediumship in animals, which has been brought up and argued by one of your most avid members. In virtue of the maxim ‘*the one who can do the most can do the least*’, he believes that we should be able to mediumize birds and other animals, using them to communicate with the human species. It is what you call in philosophy, and more particularly in logic, purely and simply a sophism. He has said, ‘Since spirits can animalize inert matter such as a table, a chair or a piano, they should with more reason be able to animalize already-animated matter, especially birds’. Nevertheless, this is not and cannot be the case within the normal laws of Spiritism.

“First, let us consider things for a moment. What is a medium? A medium is the individual being who serves as an intermediary for spirits so that they can easily communicate with humans, i.e., incarnate spirits. Therefore, without a medium, there can be no tangible, mental, written, physical or any other type of communication.

“There is a principle that I am sure all Spiritists accept: similars act through similars and like their similars. Well, what are the similars of spirits if not incarnate or discarnate spirits? Is it necessary to repeat this incessantly? Well then, I will repeat it again: your and our perispirits are drawn from the same environment; they are of an identical nature; in a word, they are similars. They both possess a capacity of assimilation that is more developed or less so, and of magnetization that is more vigorous or less so, which enable us, discarnate and incarnate spirits, very quickly and easily to establish a connection. Thus, what pertains specifically to mediums, to the very essence of their individuality, is a special affinity, and at the same time a special power of expansion that suppresses in them every possibility of rejection, establishing between them and us a kind of current or fusion that facilitates our communications. It is ultimately this possibility of rejection, proper to matter, which opposes the development of mediumship in most of those who are not mediums.

“People are always eager to exaggerate everything. Some (and I do not mean materialists) deny that animals even have a soul, while others want to see them as possessing one that is similar to ours. Why would they want to confuse the perfectible with the imperfectible? No, no, be assured of this: the fire that animates animals, the breath that enables them to act, move and speak in their own language does not at present have any ability to mix, unite or merge with the divine breath, the ethereal soul, the spirit; in short, that which animates the essentially perfectible being: the human being, ruler of all terrestrial creatures. Now, isn’t it this essential condition of perfectibility that endows the human species with superiority over all other earthly species? Thus, you should realize that there can be no individuals of any other species living on the earth that are similar to human beings, who alone are perfectible in themselves and in their works.

“Can the dog, whose intelligence is great amongst the animals, and who has become humankind’s friend and companion, perfect itself through its own initiative? No one would dare affirm such to be the case, for dogs do not enable other dogs to progress, and the most well-trained among them have all been trained by their owner. For hundreds of thousands of years beavers have constructed their lodge upon the water, always with the same proportions and according to an invariable system; nightingales and swallows have never built their nests differently than their ancestors did. A sparrow’s nest before the Flood would have been the same as a sparrow’s nest nowadays, made under the same conditions and by the same system of interweaving grasses and sticks gathered in springtime, the season of love. Bees and ants in their little organized republics have never varied their habits of gathering provisions, their way of behaving, their customs and their productions. Finally, spiders have always weaved their web in the same way.

“On the other hand, if you search for the leaf huts and tents of humankind’s early ages, you will find that they have been replaced by the castles and palaces of modern civilization. Garments of animal skin have been succeeded by fabrics of gold and silk. Finally, at every step you will discover proof of the unceasing forward march of humankind’s progress.

“From this constant, invincible and undeniable progress of the human species, and from the indefinite standstill of the other animated species, you will conclude with me that there are principles common to everything that lives and moves on the face of the earth: breath and matter, and it is no less true that only you, as incarnate spirits, are subject to that inevitable law of progress that fatalistically impels you always onward and forward. God has placed the animals at your side as auxiliaries to feed, clothe and aid you. God has given them a small degree of intelligence,

because, in order to help you, they must understand you, and God has conditioned this intelligence to the services they must render. However, in the divine wisdom God did not will for them to be subject to the law of progress in the same way. That is how they were created; that is how they have remained and shall remain until the extinction of their species.

“It used to be said: spirits mediumize and cause inert matter to move – chairs, tables and pianos. Cause to move, yes; mediumize, no! Once more: without a medium, none of these phenomena are produced. What is so extraordinary about the fact that we can cause inert, passive matter to move with the help of one or several mediums is precisely because matter per se is inert and passive and can be enabled to obey the movements and impulses with which we want to endow it. It is obvious that we need mediums in order to do this, but mediums do not have to be immediately present or *conscious*, since we can act with the elements they furnish us without their knowledge or presence, especially when the phenomena of tangibility and apportations are involved. In our fluidic envelope, which is more imponderable and subtler than the subtlest and most imponderable of your gases, the joining, combining with and blending of the medium’s more *animalized* fluidic envelope, whose properties of expansion and penetrability escape your coarse senses and is nearly inexplicable to you, enables us to move furniture and even break it in empty rooms.

“Certainly, spirits can make themselves visible and tangible to animals, and it often happens that a sudden fright grabs hold of them, which seems unreasonable to you, but is caused by their seeing one or several such spirits, who have bad intentions with regards to the individuals present or the animals’ owner. Quite often, horses are seen refusing to advance or retreat, or rearing before some invisible obstacle. Well, you can be certain that that invisible obstacle is almost always a spirit or group of spirits having

fun in deterring them. Remember Balaam's ass, which upon seeing an angel and fearing its flaming sword, did not want to go any further. It was because before it visibly appeared to Balaam, the angel only wanted to make itself visible to the animal. I will repeat, however, we do not directly mediumize animals or inert matter. We always need the *conscious* or *unconscious* participation of a human medium because we need a joining of similar fluids, which we cannot find in animals or plain matter.

"They say that Mr. T. magnetized his dog. What was the result? He killed it. The unfortunate animal died after having fallen into a kind of lifelessness or languor as a result of having been magnetized. In effect, infusing the dog with the absorbing fluid of an essence superior to the special essence of its own nature, the owner killed it by producing an action upon it similar to lightning, though much slower. Thus, since there is no possibility of assimilation between our perispirit and the fluidic envelope of animals per se, we would immediately kill them if we tried to mediumize them.

"Having established this point, I perfectly recognize the existence of diverse aptitudes among animals; that certain feelings and passions identical to human feelings and passions develop in them; that they are sensitive and grateful, vengeful and rancorous, according to the good or bad treatment they receive. God, in doing nothing incompletely, has given domestic animals – humankind's companions and servants – the qualities of sociability that are completely lacking in animals that live in the wild. However, between that fact and their ability to serve as intermediaries for the transmission of spirits' thoughts there is an abyss: the difference of natures.

"You know that we draw from the medium's brain the elements required to give our thought a form that is sensible and perceptible to you, and that it is with the help of his or her own materials

that the medium translates our thought into common language. Very well, what elements would we find in the brain of an animal? Would there be words, letters and certain symbols similar to those that we find in even the least intelligent human? Nevertheless, you will say that animals comprehend human thought and can even divine it. Yes, trained animals comprehend certain thoughts, but have you ever happened to see them reproduce them? No. Thus, we must conclude that animals cannot serve as interpreters.

“To summarize: mediumistic phenomena cannot be produced without the conscious or unconscious participation of mediums, and it is only among incarnates, who are spirits as we are, that we find those who can serve us as mediums. As for teaching dogs, birds and other animals to perform this or that service, that is your business and not ours.”

Erastus

The September 1861 issue of *Revue Spirite* provides detailed explanations concerning a process used by trainers of learned birds, which enables the birds to draw from a deck of cards the ones requested – Auth.

CHAPTER XXIII



Obsession

- Simple Obsession • Fascination • Subjugation • Causes of Obsession • Means of Combating Obsession

237. Of all the difficulties presented in the practice of Spiritism, among the worst we must place *obsession*, which is the domination that certain spirits may acquire over certain individuals. This domination is always the work of little-evolved spirits, for good ones never exert any kind of coercion whatsoever; instead, they provide counsel and fight against the influence of evil spirits, and whenever they are not listened to, they prefer simply to withdraw. Evil ones, on the other hand, latch onto whomever they can control. If they manage to dominate someone, they identify with the victim's spirit, leading the person as if he or she were a child.

Obsession displays many characteristics which we must distinguish precisely, and which result from the degree of coercion and the nature of the effects it produces. Thus, the word *obsession* is a generic term used to designate this kind of phenomenon, whose main varieties are: *simple obsession*, *fascination* and *subjugation*.

Simple Obsession

238. *Simple obsession* occurs when malevolent spirits impose themselves upon mediums, interfere against their will in the communications they receive, impede them from communicating with other spirits and substitute themselves for those who are evoked.

No mediums are obsessed by the simple fact of being deceived by a lying spirit, because the best mediums are subject to deception, especially in the beginning when they still lack experience, just as among us the most honest individuals may be deceived by swindlers. Hence, one may be deceived without being obsessed. Instead, obsession consists in the tenacity of a spirit, from which the victim cannot break free.

In simple obsession, mediums know perfectly well that they are dealing with a deceptive spirit, who does not in any way disguise or cloak its evil intentions and its desire to cause trouble. These mediums easily recognize the deceit, and since they are on the alert, they are rarely fooled. Thus, this form of obsession is only unpleasant and only has the inconvenience of making communications difficult with serious spirits or those we are fond of.

We can include in this category cases of *physical obsession*, which consist in noisy and obstinate manifestations of certain spirits, who spontaneously produce raps and other sounds. Concerning this phenomenon, we refer the reader back to the chapter, *Spontaneous Physical Manifestations* (no. 82).

Fascination

239. *Fascination* has much more serious consequences. It refers to a delusion created directly by a spirit in the thought of a medium, which in a certain manner paralyzes his or her capacity to judge the quality of the communications. Fascinated mediums

do not believe themselves to be deceived. These spirits manage to inspire them with a blind confidence that prevents them from realizing the deception and comprehending the absurdity of what they write, even when it jumps out at the eyes of everyone else. The delusion can reach the point to where it causes them to consider the most ridiculous language as sublime. Those who think that this type of obsession can only touch simple, ignorant and senseless persons are mistaken. The most refined, educated and otherwise intelligent individuals are not at all exempt from this kind of delusion, which proves that we are addressing an aberration produced by an outside cause, whose influence dominates them.

We have stated that the consequences of fascination are very serious. What happens is that, thanks to the delusion that results from it, these spirits guide the victims whom they have managed to dominate as if they were blind, and they can lead them to accept the most absurd doctrines and erroneous theories as being the sole expression of truth. Moreover, they can incite them to foolish, compromising and even dangerous acts.

One can easily and fully comprehend the difference between simple obsession and fascination. One can also understand that the spirits who produce these two types must differ from each other in character. In the former, spirits who attach themselves to mediums only inconvenience them by their tenacity, from which the mediums try to break free. It is much different in the latter, for in order to achieve their purposes such spirits must be skillful, cunning and deeply hypocritical, since they can only succeed at being deceptive if they impose themselves by wearing a mask and putting on a false appearance of virtue. Grand words such as charity, humility and love for God serve as their calling card, but through it all shine signs of how little-evolved they are – which only those who are *fascinated* cannot perceive. That is why these spirits dread, more than anything else, persons who see things

clearly. Their tactic is nearly always that of inspiring their mediums to avoid whoever might open their eyes; thus, by avoiding any contradiction, they are always certain to be in the right.

Subjugation

240. *Subjugation* is a constriction that causes its victims' will to become paralyzed, making them act in spite of themselves. In other words, they find themselves under true *bondage*.

Subjugation can be either *mental* or *physical*. In the former, those who are subjugated are led to make frequently absurd and compromising decisions, which, under a kind of delusion, they regard as sane – it is a type of fascination. In the latter, the spirit acts upon the physical organs to produce involuntary movements. In writing mediums, it produces an incessant need to write, even at inopportune times. We have seen subjugated mediums who, in the absence of a pen or pencil, pretended to write with their finger and they could even be seen on the street, writing on doors and walls.

Corporeal subjugation sometimes goes so far as to lead the medium to commit the most ridiculous acts. We knew of a man, neither young nor handsome, who was dominated by an obsession of this nature. He was coerced by an irresistible force to fall on his knees before a young woman in whom he had no interest and to ask her to marry him. At other times he felt a strong pressure in his back and in the curves of his legs that, in spite of his resistance, caused him to kneel and kiss the earth in public places in the midst of a crowd. He was regarded as crazy by those who knew him, but we are absolutely convinced that he was not, for he was fully conscious of the ridiculous things he did against his will – he suffered from it terribly.

241. Formerly, the dominion exerted by evil spirits was called *possession*, when their influence reached the point of

producing an aberration of the human faculties. For us, possession would be synonymous with subjugation. However, we have not adopted the term possession for two reasons: first, it implies a belief in the existence of beings who were created for evil and forever turned to it, whereas in reality there are only beings who are at different stages of imperfection and who are susceptible to improving themselves; second, it also implies the idea of the body being taken over by a foreign spirit, a kind of cohabitation, whereas there is actually only coercion. The word *subjugation* expresses the idea perfectly. Thus, for us there are no possessed individuals in the ordinary sense of the word, but only *obsessed*, *fascinated* and *subjugated* ones.

Causes of Obsession

242. As we have said, obsession is one of the greatest obstacles of mediumship, and it is also one of the most frequent. Hence, every effort should be taken to combat it, especially, since apart from the personal harm resulting from it, it comprises an absolute obstacle to the purity and veracity of communications. Since obsession to any degree is always the result of coercion, and since such coercion can never be exerted by a good spirit, it follows that every communication given through an obsessed medium is of suspected origin and merits no confidence at all. If per chance something good may be found in it, it is necessary to keep it and reject everything else that displays the least reason for doubt.

243. Obsession is recognized by the following characteristics:

1) A spirit's insistence on communicating, whether or not the medium desires it, through writing, audition, typology, etc., and its opposition to all other spirits to do so.

2) The illusion is such that, in spite of the intelligence of the medium, it prevents him or her from recognizing the falseness and ridiculousness of the communications received.

3) A belief in the infallibility and indisputable identity of the spirits who communicate, and who state lies and absurdities under respectable and venerated names.

4) The medium's acceptance of praise from the spirits who communicate through his or her intermediation.

5) A propensity for avoiding those who could provide enlightenment about the situation.

6) Offence taken at criticisms of the communications received.

7) An incessant and inopportune need to write.

8) Any form of physical coercion that dominates the will and forces one to act or speak without wanting to.

9) Continuous noises and disturbances around the medium that are either caused by the medium him or herself, or that have the medium as their target.

244. In light of the danger of obsession, the question arises as to whether it is not actually regrettable to be a medium at all and whether mediumship itself provokes obsession; in other words, whether this is not evidence of the inappropriateness of spirit communications. Our response is simple, and we ask that it be pondered with care.

Since it was neither mediums nor Spiritists who created spirits, but rather it was the spirits who gave origin to Spiritists and mediums, and since spirits are simply human souls, it is obvious that spirits have existed as long as humans have, and that they have always exerted their beneficial or harmful influence on humankind. The mediumistic faculty is for them only a way to manifest themselves, and in the absence of this faculty they do so in a thousand other ways that are more concealed or less so.

Therefore, it would be erroneous to believe that spirits only exert their influence through written or verbal communications. Their influence is on-going, and those who do not concern themselves with spirits, or who do not even believe they exist, are nonetheless exposed to it like everyone else – even more so, by not having any means of defense at their disposal. It is through mediumship that a spirit makes itself known. If it is evil, it always betrays itself no matter how hypocritical it may be. We can therefore state that mediumship enables men and women to meet their enemies face to face (if we may so express ourselves), and combat them with their own weapons. Without this faculty, evil spirits act in the shadows, and counting on their invisibility, they truly do much harm. Through how many acts are not men and women urged to their disgrace, which could have been avoided if they had had a way of enlightening themselves! Disbelievers do not realize how right they are when they speak of someone who persists in error: “His evil spirit drives him to his loss.” Thus, far from making the domination by evil spirits easier, knowledge of spiritism should have as its result – in the not-too-far-off future and after its promulgation – *the destruction of such domination* by giving everyone the means of being on guard against these spirits’ suggestions. Then, those who succumb to them will only have themselves to complain about.

A general rule applies: those who receive evil written or verbal spirit communications are under an evil influence, and this influence imposes itself on them whether they write or not; that is, regardless of whether they are mediums or believers. Writing offers them a way to be certain as to the nature of the spirits who act upon them and a way to combat them if they are evil, which is more successfully accomplished when they understand the motives behind their writing. If their blindness is such that it does not allow them to understand, others will be able to open their eyes.

To summarize: the danger is not in Spiritism, since, on the contrary, we can use it to control and save ourselves from the constant risk to which we expose ourselves without realizing it. The danger is, instead, in the propensity of certain proud mediums who light-heartedly regard themselves as exclusive instruments of highly evolved spirits, and in the kind of fascination that does not allow them to comprehend the idiocies they interpret. However, even those who are not mediums may fall into the same trap. Let us make a comparison. A certain man has a secret enemy, of whom he is unaware, and who, unbeknownst to him, spreads slander and everything of the vilest nature that he can engender. The man loses his fortune; his friends avoid him and his inner happiness is completely upset. Since he cannot discover the hand that is injuring him, he cannot defend himself and ends up defeated. However, one day the secret enemy writes to him and betrays his identity in spite of his cunning. Having found out who his enemy is, the man can now expose him and recover his reputation. Such is the role of evil spirits, whom Spiritism provides us with the possibility of discovering and outsmarting.

245. The motives behind obsession vary according to the character of the spirits. At times it entails revenge against persons who wronged them during their present life or in a previous one. Quite often it is simply the desire to do evil since because they suffer, they wish to make others suffer too, feeling a kind of pleasure in tormenting and humiliating them. The impatience of their victims also excites them because they then accomplish their objective; however, if their victims are patient, they tire of the game. If their victims become irritated and show their anger, they do exactly what they want them to do. Sometimes such spirits act out of hatred and jealousy toward whatever is good; that is why they cast their malevolence over honest individuals. One of these spirits attached itself like a true limpet to a good family of our

acquaintance, which it did not, however, have the satisfaction of deceiving. When questioned as to the motive for its attack against such good folk instead of latching onto individuals like itself, it responded: *they do not give me anything to be envious of*. Others are driven by sheer cowardice, taking advantage of the mental weakness of certain persons whom they know to be incapable of offering any resistance. One of these, who subjugated a boy of rather low intelligence, responded to us concerning the reason for its choice: *I feel a real need to torment someone: a sensible person would repel me; I have attached myself to a lamebrain, who cannot resist*.

246. There are obsessing spirits who are not evil, who are even quite good, but are dominated by the pride of false wisdom: they have their opinions and their own theories about the sciences, social economics, morality, religion and philosophy. They wish to impose their opinion, and to do so they seek out mediums that are sufficiently credulous to accept them with closed eyes, fascinating them to the degree that they can no longer distinguish between truth and falsehood. These are the most dangerous, for they do not vacillate in their sophistry and can impose the most ridiculous utopian ideas. Since they are fully knowledgeable of the prestige of famous names, they have no scruples about impersonating them and do not even balk before the sacrilege of calling themselves Jesus, the Virgin Mary or some venerated saint. They try to delude their victims by using pompous language that is more pretentious than profound, full of technical terms and highlighted with grandiose words such as charity and morality. They avoid giving evil counsels because they know that they would be rejected; hence, those whom they deceive always defend them, affirming: *You can see very well that they have said nothing evil*. However, for such spirits, morality is merely a passport – it is the least of their concerns. What they want more than anything else is to dominate and impose their ideas no matter how truly absurd they are.

247. Theorizing spirits are nearly always scribblers, which is why they seek out mediums who write easily, attempting to make them their tamed and, especially, enthusiastic instruments through fascination. Such spirits are generally verbose and very prolix, seeking to make up for a lack of quality through quantity. They take pleasure in dictating to their interpreters voluminous, indigestible and, very often, barely intelligible writings, which fortunately have as a side effect the material impossibility of being read by the masses. Truly high order spirits are frugal with words, saying much in only a few lines – prodigious fecundity should always be regarded with suspicion.

One can never be too prudent when dealing with the publication of such writings. The utopian ideas and eccentricities that usually abound in them, and which violate common sense, elicit a very disagreeable impression in the novices who are taken in by them, giving them an erroneous idea about Spiritism. They also serve as weapons for adversaries to ridicule it. Among such publications are those that, without being evil and without being characterized as obsession, can nevertheless be considered as imprudent, *untimely*, and incompetent.

248. It frequently happens that a certain medium can only communicate with one particular spirit, who connects itself with him or her and responds on behalf of other spirits. This does not always represent an obsession, since it may result from such a medium's lack of flexibility and from a special affinity on his or her part with this or that spirit. Obsession per se only exists when a spirit imposes itself and willingly drives others away, which is never done by a good spirit. Normally, spirits who latch onto mediums in order to dominate them do not bear up under a critical examination of their communications. When they see that such communications are not blindly accepted but are submitted to discussion, they do not leave their mediums; instead, they suggest

the thought to them that they should avoid others – and quite often they order them to do so. All mediums who feel offended at criticisms of their communications are in fact echoing the spirit dominating them, and such a spirit cannot be good, since it inspires them with the illogical thought of rejecting scrutiny. It is always harmful to mediums to isolate themselves because there is no control mechanism for their communications. They should not only receive clarification from third parties, but should also study all the forms of communication in order to compare them. By limiting themselves to those they receive, no matter how good they may seem, they remain exposed to being deceived as to their true value. They should also consider the fact that they cannot know everything, and that they always go round and round within the same circle of ideas. (See no. 192, *Exclusive Mediums*)

Means of Combating Obsession

249. The means of combating obsession vary depending on the characteristics in which it appears. There is no real danger for all mediums who are good and convinced that they are dealing with a deceiving spirit, which is the case in simple obsession. It is nothing more to them than a disagreeable situation; however, precisely by being disagreeable, such spirits have one more reason to persecute their victims in order to humiliate them. Two essential measures must be taken by mediums in such a case: prove to the spirit that they have not been fooled by it, and that it is *impossible* that they will allow themselves to be fooled; second, tire its patience by showing it that they have more patience than it has. When it is convinced that it is wasting its time, it will end up withdrawing, just as in the case of importune individuals when no one will listen to them.

Nonetheless, this is not always enough and such spirits can linger for a long time – there are some who are so tenacious that

months and years mean little to them. Furthermore, mediums must fervently appeal to their guardian angel and the good spirits with whom they have affinity, praying for their assistance. As for the obsessing spirit, no matter how evil it may be, it is necessary to deal with it strictly but at the same time benevolently, overcoming it with goodness and praying for it. If it is a truly wicked spirit, it will at first laugh at all this, but perseveringly submitted to a process of moralization, it will end up emending itself. It is a conversion to be undertaken, an often painful, difficult task, but whose merit is in its very difficulty, and when it has been well performed, it always brings the satisfaction of having fulfilled a duty of charity, and frequently of having brought a lost soul back to the path of goodness.

It is also worthwhile to suspend written communications when we realize that they proceed from an evil spirit who does not want to see reason in order not to give it the pleasure of being heard. In certain cases, it may even be worthwhile to stop writing altogether for some time, depending on the particular circumstances. However, if writing mediums can thus avoid such conversations by abstaining from writing, the same cannot be said of hearing mediums, whom obsessing spirits sometimes persecute at every instant with gross and obscene blathering, and who do not have the option of plugging their ears. Moreover, we must realize that certain individuals are actually entertained by the trivial language of this type of spirit – who encourages and provokes them to laugh at its silliness – rather than imposing silence upon it and guiding it morally. Our counsels cannot be applied to those who want to drown themselves.

250. Therefore, in simple obsession there is only annoyance and no real danger to all mediums who do not allow themselves to be deceived, since they cannot be misled. However, precisely the opposite occurs with *fascination*, for then the domination of these

spirits over their victims is limitless. The only thing to do is to convince their victims that they have been deceived, and to regress their obsession to the degree of simple obsession. This is not always easy and is sometimes impossible. The ascendancy of such spirits over their victims is such that it makes them deaf to all reasoning, and they can even reach the point of doubting the judgments of science when such spirits commit some blatant scientific heresy. As we have already stated, those who are fascinated normally do not take advice very well. Criticism upsets and irritates them, and they intensely dislike those who do not share in their admiration. To suspect their obsessor is almost blasphemy to them, which is exactly what the spirit wants: to make them kneel before its words.

One of these spirits exerted an extraordinary fascination over a person of our acquaintance. We evoked it, and after some boastfulness and seeing that it could not fool us as to its identity, it confessed that it had assumed a false name. We asked it why it had been abusing this individual so much, and it responded with these words, which clearly reveal the character of this kind of spirit: *"I looked for a man I could handle; I have found him and I shall remain with him."* "But if we enlighten him about you, he will make you go away." *"Well, we'll just see about that!"* Since there is no one as blind as those who do not want to see, then when we realize the futility of all attempts to open the eyes of those who are fascinated, it is best to simply leave them alone with their delusions. We cannot heal those who, being ill, persist in their illness and find comfort in it.

251. Corporeal subjugation almost always deprives those who are obsessed of the energies needed for them to gain control over the evil spirit. This is why the intervention of third persons is required, who act through magnetism or through the force of their own will. When those who are obsessed do not cooperate, then these persons must gain ascendancy over the spirit themselves. However,

since this ascendancy can only be moral, it can be exercised only by persons who are *morally superior* to the spirit, and their power will be in proportion to such moral superiority because then they can impose themselves on the spirit, who is obligated to submit to them. That is why Jesus had such great power to expel what were at the time called demons, that is, evil obsessor spirits.

At this point, we can only offer some general advice, since there is no physical process or formula or, especially, any sacramental word, which has the power to expel obsessing spirits. What is sometimes lacking in those who are obsessed is sufficient fluidic power. In this case, the magnetic action of a good magnetizer can provide them with effective help. Moreover, it is always a good idea to obtain, through trustworthy mediums, the counsels of a high order spirit or their guardian angel.

252. The moral imperfections of those who are obsessed are frequently an obstacle to their liberation. Following is a noteworthy example that may serve as a bit of instruction for everybody.

For several years, a group of sisters had been the victims of very unpleasant acts of depredation. Their clothes were constantly being scattered throughout the house, even in the ceiling, and were shredded, cut and poked full of holes no matter how careful the sisters were in keeping them locked up. Since these ladies were isolated in a small provincial town, they had never even heard of Spiritism. The first idea to occur to them was naturally to believe that they were being victimized by pranksters, but the incidents persisted and the precautions they took led them to give up on that idea. Only after quite some time, and thanks to a few references, they were directed to us to try to determine the cause of the disturbances, and if there was any possible remedy for putting an end to them. The cause was obvious, but the remedy was very difficult. The spirit who was manifesting itself was obviously malevolent. Upon being evoked, it displayed great perversity and

was inaccessible to good sentiments. However, prayer seemed to exert a good influence on it, but after a short break the depredations began once again. A high order spirit then provided this advice:

“The best thing for these ladies to do is to pray to their protector spirits not to abandon them, and I have no better advice to give them than to delve into their own consciences and come to terms with themselves as to whether they have always practiced love and charity toward their neighbor. I do not mean the kind of charity that is doled out, but charity of speech, because, unfortunately, they do not know how to hold their tongues, and therefore they do not justify their desire to be free of their tormentor by pious acts. They truly love to speak ill of their neighbor, and the spirit who is obsessing them is taking his revenge, for during his life he had been a scapegoat for them. They only need to probe their memory and they will soon discover whom they are dealing with.

“However, if they resolve to mend their ways, their guardian angels will return to them, and their presence alone will be sufficient to drive off the evil spirit, who has attached itself to one of them in particular because her guardian angel has withdrawn from her due to her reprehensible acts and her evil thoughts. They must pray fervently for those who suffer, and above all they must practice the virtues that God recommends to all according to their situation.”

Upon commenting that these words seemed to us to be a bit severe and that perhaps they should be toned down before transmitting them, the spirit added:

“I must say what I must say, because these ladies are accustomed to believing that they are doing no harm with their tongue, when in fact they are doing great harm. Thus, it has been necessary for this spirit to shock them in such a way as to serve as a warning.”

This resulted in a far-reaching instruction in affirming that moral imperfections may give access to obsessor spirits, and that

the surest way of getting rid of them is to attract good spirits through moral deeds. Good spirits are naturally more powerful than evil ones, and their will is sufficient to repel them, but they only answer those who help themselves by making efforts to improve. Otherwise, they stay away and leave the field free for evil spirits, who thus become instruments of punishment – good spirits allow them to act for this purpose.

253. However, we must avoid attributing to the direct action of spirits all our troubles, which are usually the result of our own carelessness and lack of foresight. A farmer once wrote to us that for twelve years all sorts of mishaps had befallen his animals. His cows had either died or no longer gave milk, and his horses, sheep and pigs had died. He had offered many novenas, which had not remedied the problem, nor had the masses he attended or the exorcisms he ordered. Thus, he believed according to farm superstition that his animals had been the target of a spell. Deeming us unquestionably to possess greater power to conjure than the priest of his village, he asked us for advice. Here is the response we received:

“The death or sickness of this man’s animals stems from his infected stables, which he has not cleaned because *it would cost too much.*”

254. We shall close this chapter with the Spirits’ responses to a few other questions that will support what we have stated:

1) *Why can’t certain mediums free themselves from evil spirits who attach to them, and why don’t the good spirits whom they call upon have enough power to drive the others away and communicate through their intermediation?*

“Good spirits do not lack the power; rather, the mediums are almost never in any position to help them. Their nature is more adequate for other relationships, and their fluid identifies

more with one spirit than another. This is what gives such power to the spirits who want to deceive them.

2) *However, it seems to us that there are truly deserving individuals, who are morally irreprehensible, but who are nevertheless prevented from communicating with good spirits.*

“It is a trial. Who knows if they might not have a stain of evil on their heart? If a little pride does not hide behind their appearance of goodness? Such trials reveal to the obsessed their weakness and that they should strive to be more humble.

“Is there anyone on the whole earth whom you can call perfect? Those who seem to possess all the appearances of virtue can still have many secret defects, an old leaven of imperfection. Thus, for example, you say that some particular man does not practice any evil, that he is loyal in all his social relationships, and that he is a good and worthy individual. But how do you know that those qualities are not stained with pride? That there is not some trace of selfishness in him? That he is not greedy, jealous, resentful, slanderous and many other things that you do not perceive, since your relationship with him gives you no opportunity to discover them? The most powerful means of combating the influence of evil spirits is to approach the nature of the good ones as much as possible.”

3) *Is the obsession that prevents mediums from receiving the communications they desire always a sign of their unworthiness?*

“I did not say that it is a sign of unworthiness, but that there can be obstacles to certain communications. They must endeavor to overcome such obstacles, which are to be found within themselves. If they do not, their prayers and supplications will do nothing. It is not enough for a sick person to tell the doctor: “Give me health; I want to get better.” The doctor can do nothing if the sick person doesn’t do what is required.”

4) *Then, could the privation of communicating with certain spirits be a kind of punishment?*

“In certain cases it may be a bona fide punishment, just as the possibility of communicating with them is a reward that they should try to merit.” (See *Loss and Suspension of Mediumship*, no. 220)

5) *Can't we also combat the influence of evil spirits by guiding them morally?*

“Yes, and that is exactly what you should do because it is often a duty that has been given you, which you should charitably and devotedly fulfill. By means of your good counsels, you may lead them to repentance and hasten their advancement.”

– *How can we have more influence than the spirits themselves in this case?*

“Perverse spirits more often draw close to humans, whom they seek to torment, rather than spirits, whom they try to avoid as much as possible. When they draw close to individuals who attempt to moralize them, they at first do not listen and even laugh at them; however, if such individuals know how to persist in the matter, these spirits end up being affected by them. High order spirits can only address them in the name of God, and this terrifies them. Humans obviously have no more power than high order spirits, but their language is more accessible to a less evolved nature, and seeing the influence they can exert over low order spirits, they better comprehend the solidarity between heaven and earth. Furthermore, the ascendancy that humans can have over spirits is in proportion to their superior moral development. They cannot dominate highly evolved spirits, or even those who, without being so evolved, are nevertheless good and benevolent. However, they can dominate spirits who are of low moral development.” (See no. 279)

6) *If it develops further, can corporeal subjugation lead to insanity?*

“Yes, a kind of insanity whose cause the world does not recognize, but which is in no way connected to ordinary insanity. Among those who are treated as insane, there are many who are

really subjugated instead. They require moral treatment because they become truly insane when they are given treatments intended for an organic cause. When doctors understand Spiritism sufficiently, they will know how to make the distinction and will heal a larger number of ill persons than they do with their present techniques.” (See no. 221)

7) What should we think of those who see some kind of danger in Spiritism, and who think that the best way to prevent it would be to prohibit spirit communications altogether?

“Even if they could prohibit certain persons from communicating with spirits, they could not prohibit the spontaneous communications given to these same persons, because they can neither suppress spirits nor prevent them from exerting their secret influence. Such an attitude resembles that of children who close their eyes and believe that no one can see them. It would be crazy to suppress something that offers great advantages just because imprudent people might abuse it. The way to prevent problems is rather to make this Doctrine fully understood.



The Identity of Spirits

• Possible Proofs of Identity • Distinguishing
between Good and Evil Spirits • Questions
concerning the Nature and Identity of Spirits

Possible Proofs of Identity

255. The issue of spirit identity is one of the most controversial, even among the followers of Spiritism, because spirits obviously do not bring any documentation with them, and we know that some of them very readily use borrowed names. Hence, after obsession, this is one of the greatest difficulties of practical Spiritism. In many cases, however, the matter of unmistakable identity is secondary and is of no real significance.

It is most difficult to prove the identity of ancient personages and it often becomes even impossible, rendering only the possibility of making a purely moral appraisal. We judge spirits as we judge individuals – by their language. For example, if a spirit presents itself using the name Fenelon, but states only trivialities and puerilities, it is obviously not Fenelon. However, if what it says is worthy of Fenelon's character and which he himself would not repudiate, we

at least have some material and moral proof of the great possibility that it is indeed Fenelon. It is in these cases, especially, that true identity becomes a secondary issue: if the spirit says only honorable things, it really does not matter what name it uses.

Undoubtedly, some will object that if a spirit were to take an assumed name, even for good purposes, it would nevertheless be committing fraud, and therefore could not be a good spirit. At this point, delicate issues arise which are difficult to comprehend, but which we shall attempt to address.

256. As spirits purify themselves and ascend within the hierarchy³⁵, the distinctive characteristics of their personality more or less disappear into the uniformity of perfection, but this does not mean that they do not retain their individuality. This applies both to high order spirits and pure spirits. At this level, the names they used while on earth during a thousand *ephemeral* existences are something quite insignificant. Furthermore, we have noted that spirits mutually attract one another through their similar qualities and they comprise sympathetic groups or families. On the other hand, if we were to consider the huge number of spirits, who, since time began, must have finally reached the highest ranks, and if we were to compare the highly limited number of individuals who have left a great name on the earth, we would understand that among the high order spirits who can communicate with us, most are nameless. However, since we need names to fix our ideas to, they may take on a name of a familiar personage whose nature most identifies with their own. It is thus that our guardian angels most of the time make themselves known by using the name of a saint whom we venerate. Hence, if a person's guardian angel uses the name St. Peter, for example, there is actually no material proof that it is in fact the apostle. It could instead be an entirely unknown

³⁵ The Spirit Hierarchy. See quest. 100 ff. in *The Spirits' Book* – Tr.

spirit belonging to the family of spirits to which St. Peter himself belongs. The fact is that no matter by what name we evoke our guardian angel, it will answer our call because it is attracted by our thought – the name is irrelevant.

The same occurs whenever a highly evolved spirit communicates by using the name of a known personage. Nothing proves that it is in fact the spirit of that personage, but if it said nothing during its spontaneous dictation that would belie the spiritual elevation of the name it uses, then there is a *presumption* that it is who it claims to be. And, in any event, we may state that if it is not the actual spirit, it must be one of the same level, or even one who has been sent by it. In sum, the issue of names is secondary, since we can regard a name as simply being an indication of the place the spirit occupies in the Spirit Hierarchy.

The situation is otherwise when a low order spirit assumes a respectable name in order to add believability to its words. This situation is so common that we can never be too careful regarding such substitutions, because it is thanks to borrowed names – especially with the aid of fascination – that certain theorizing spirits, who are more proud than wise, try to impose the most ridiculous ideas.

Therefore, as we have said, the issue of identity is more or less indifferent when addressing general instructions, since the most elevated spirits can substitute for one another without causing problems. Highly evolved spirits comprise a collectivity, so to speak, wherein individualities are, with a few exceptions, completely unknown. We are more interested in the teaching than in the individual; thus, if the teaching is good, it matters little whether it has come from Peter or Paul. We must judge it by its quality rather than by its name. If a bottle of wine is bad, the label will not make it any better. However, the situation is different with intimate communications because then it really is the individual,

or his or her personality in whom we are interested. It is then with good reason that we try to assure ourselves that the manifesting spirit is really the desired one.

257. Identity is much easier to verify when dealing with contemporary spirits whose habits and character are well known because such habits are precisely what they have not had time to free themselves from, and which enable us to recognize them. We could say that it is one of the surest signs of identity. A spirit can obviously provide proof through the answers it gives to questions asked of it, but only when it is appropriate, for usually requests of this nature will insult it and it is best to avoid asking them. When a spirit leaves its body, it does not rid itself of its susceptibility, and any question meant to put it to the test will offend it. *There are questions that no one would ask it during life* out of fear of offending it, so why would we want to treat it with any less consideration after death? If a man attending an exclusive function declined to give out his name, would someone ask him to prove his identity under the pretext that there are imposters? This gentleman would have the right to remind such a person of the rules of civility. Such is the case with spirits who either do not respond at all or who withdraw. Let us take an example for comparison. Suppose that the astronomer Arago presented himself while alive at a home in which no one recognized him and was received with these words: "You say you're Arago, but we don't recognize you, so we need you to prove it by answering a few questions: solve this astronomical problem and give us your Christian name, your surname and the names of your children; also, tell us what you did at such and such a time on such and such a day, etc." How would he respond? As a spirit he would do what he would if alive; other spirits would do the same.

258. Even though they refuse to answer puerile and absurd questions, which we would not dare ask of them if they were alive,

spirits nonetheless often provide spontaneous and unarguable proof as to their identity. They do so by revealing their character through their language, by their use of expressions that had been peculiar to them, and by referring to certain significant events and particularities of their lives that are sometimes unknown to their audience, but whose veracity may nevertheless be verified. Proofs of identity also result from many unforeseen circumstances that do not always appear the first time, but which do so in subsequent manifestations. Thus, it is prudent to wait for them instead of eliciting them, cautiously observing all those that may spring from the nature of the communications. (See the related case in no. 70)

259. A method that is sometimes used successfully to confirm identity whenever the spirit is suspect is to make it affirm *in the name of Almighty God* that it is who it says it is. A usurper will often falter before committing sacrilege. After having begun to write: *I affirm in the name of...*, it will stop and angrily scribble some meaningless marks or break the pencil. A more hypocritical spirit will skirt the problem by omitting something, for example, writing: *I assure you that I am telling the truth*; or: *I affirm, in God's name, that it is I myself who am speaking to you*, etc. However, there are some who are not even that scrupulous, who will swear by anything you want them to. One of them used to communicate with a medium saying, "I am *God* himself", and the medium, being highly honored with such elevated grace, did not hesitate to believe it. When we evoked it, it did not dare keep up the charade and said: "*I am not actually God, but I am his son.*" "So then you're Jesus? (Of course, this was not probable, because Jesus is too elevated to resort to subterfuge). Do you dare affirm in God's name that you are Christ?" "*I didn't say I'm Jesus; I said I'm a son of God because I'm one of his creatures.*"

We should conclude from this that when a spirit refuses to affirm its identity in the name of God, it is always proof that the

name it is using is fraudulent, but an affirmation only provides us with the presumption and not the proof of identity.

260. Among the proofs of identity we may also place similarity of handwriting and signature. However, such a means of proof is not available to all mediums, and neither does it represent a foolproof guarantee, for there are forgers in the spirit world as well as in our own. Therefore, there is only a presumption of identity, which acquires value only within the circumstances in which it is produced. The same applies to all physical signs, which some individuals provide as talismans that cannot be imitated by deceiving spirits. However, for spirits who dare perjure themselves in God's name or who imitate a signature, no physical sign could possibly present much of an obstacle. The best of all proofs of identity is in the language and unforeseen circumstances.

261. One could certainly say that if a spirit can imitate a signature, it can also imitate language. That is true. We have seen those who ignominiously assume the name of Christ, and for an even better deception, imitate his evangelical style by indulging in well known expressions such as: *Verily, verily I say to you*. If we would study the writing *without allowing ourselves to be influenced*, however, deeply scrutinizing the thoughts and the character of the expressions, and noticing that alongside the beautiful maxims of charity there are puerile and ridiculous recommendations, we would have to be completely *fascinated* to be fooled. Yes, certain formal aspects of language can be imitated, but not of thought. Ignorance will never imitate true wisdom, just as vice will never imitate true virtue. The spirit will eventually show its true colors. That is when the medium and the evoker must use all their discernment and reasoning to separate the truth from the lie. They must persuade themselves that perverse spirits are capable of all sorts of fraud, and that the more elevated the name a spirit

uses, the more distrust it should arouse. How many mediums have received apocryphal communications signed by Jesus, Mary or some venerated saint!

Distinguishing between Good and Evil Spirits

262. If the perfect identification of spirits is in many cases a secondary, unimportant issue, the same cannot be said concerning the distinction between good and evil spirits. We may be indifferent as to their individuality, but never their quality. In every instructive communication, this is the point upon which we must concentrate our attention, since only it can provide us with a measure of confidence that we can put in the manifesting spirit, no matter what name it has assumed. Is the spirit who has manifested itself good or evil? To what degree of the hierarchy does it belong? That is the crucial question. (See *Spirit Hierarchy*, no. 100, in *The Spirits' Book*)

263. As we have stated, we judge spirits by their language in the same way as we do people. Let us suppose that a man receives twenty letters from persons he does not know. By their style, ideas and numerous characteristics he will be able to tell which are educated and which are uneducated, which are polite or impolite, superficial, profound, frivolous, proud, serious, sentimental, etc. The same applies to spirits. We should regard them as unknown pen pals and ask ourselves what we would think of their knowledge and character if they stated or wrote such things. We can state as an invariable rule, without exception, that *the language of spirits always corresponds to their degree of evolution*. Truly high order spirits do not limit themselves to saying only good things, but they say them in terms that absolutely exclude any trivialness. No matter how good statements may appear to be, if they are stained with a single expression of low quality, it provides us with an unquestionable

sign of inferiority, and even more so if the communication offends social values because of its grossness. Language always reveals its origin, whether by thought or by form. Thus, even if a spirit wanted to deceive us with its pretended superiority, we would only have to converse with it for awhile to discern its true character.

264. Benevolence and kindness are also essential attributes of purified spirits. They do not feed hate toward humans or other spirits. They pity weakness and criticize error, but always with moderation and without bitterness or animosity. If we believe that truly good spirits can want only what is good and say good things, we must conclude that everything in the language of spirits that denotes a lack of benevolence and kindness cannot have come from a good spirit.

265. Intelligence is far from being a sure sign of moral superiority, because intelligence and morality do not always develop in tandem. A spirit can be good, kind and of limited knowledge, while an intelligent and educated spirit can be quite inferior morally.

It is generally believed that in questioning the spirit of someone who had been knowledgeable in a certain specialty while on earth, one will more surely obtain the truth. This would seem logical, but nonetheless it is not always the case. Experience has shown us that scholars, as much as other men and women, and especially those who left the earth a short time ago, are still under the control of the prejudices of their corporeal life, and are not immediately free of a theorizing mind. It is also the case that, influenced by the ideas that had nourished and provided them with glory during life, they see things with less clarity than we might suppose. However, we do not state this principle as a rule - far from it. Rather, we only warn that this may happen, and that as a result their scholarliness as humans is not always a guarantee of their infallibility as spirits.

266. By submitting all communications to rigorous examination, probing and analyzing their ideas and expressions as if we were appraising a literary work, rejecting *without hesitation* everything that is contrary to logic and common sense and everything that belies the character of the spirit who claims to be manifesting, we will be able to discourage deceptive spirits, who will thus withdraw, since they will be convinced that they cannot deceive us. We will repeat that this is the sole means, but it is nevertheless infallible, for no evil communication can bear up under rigorous criticism. Good spirits are never offended at such examination, because they have nothing to fear and they themselves have counseled us to proceed in this manner. Only evil ones are offended and try to dissuade us since they have everything to lose – an attitude that proves who they really are.

Here is the advice that St. Louis has given on the matter:

“No matter how legitimate the trust that the directing spirits of your works may inspire in you, there is a recommendation that can never be repeated too often, and which you must always bear in mind as you pursue your studies: weigh and analyze all the communications you receive, submitting them to the most rigorous control of reason. Whenever anything appears to be suspect, doubtful or obscure, do not neglect asking for all the explanations needed to form your opinion.”

267. Let us sum up the means for recognizing the quality of spirits in the following principles:

1) There is no other criterion for discerning the worth of spirits, except common sense. Any other formula toward this end, even if given by spirits themselves, is absurd and could not have come from highly evolved spirits.

2) We judge spirits by their language and actions. Spirits' actions involve the sentiments they inspire and the counsels they provide.

3) Accepting the fact that good spirits can only say and do what is good, then everything that is bad cannot have come from a good spirit.

4) The language of high order spirits is always noble, elevated and dignified without any mixture of trivialness. They state everything simply and modestly; they never boast, and they never make a show of their wisdom or their position among the other spirits. The language of low order or ordinary spirits always contains some reflection of the human passions. Every expression that reveals low character, self-importance, arrogance, boastfulness or sarcasm is a sure sign of inferiority and deceitfulness if the spirit presents itself using a respectful and venerated name.

5) We must not judge spirits according to the formality and correctness of their style, but must probe their inner character and analyze their words, coolly and maturely weighing them unhesitatingly. Any absence of logic, reason and prudence can leave no doubt as to a spirit's origin, whatever may be the name it uses to adorn itself. (See no. 224)

6) The language of elevated spirits is always identical – if not in form, at least in substance. Their ideas are the same, whatever may be the time and place. Their communications might be more developed or less so, depending on the circumstances, needs or ease of communicating, but they will never be contradictory. If two communications under the same name contradict each other, one of them is obviously apocryphal. The true one will be the one in which nothing belies the known character of the personage. Between two communications signed by St. Vincent de Paul, for example, one proclaiming unity and charity, and the other tending to sow disharmony, no sane person could possibly be deceived.

7) Good spirits only say what they know, keeping quiet or confessing their ignorance about what they do not know. Evil spirits confidently talk about anything without any regard for the

truth. Every notorious scientific heresy, every principle that offends common sense reveals fraud, even though the spirit presents itself as being enlightened.

8) Frivolous spirits are further recognizable by their willingness to foretell the future and to specify the dates of physical events that we should not know about. Good spirits may enable us to have a presentiment of future things when such knowledge is useful, but they are never precise as to dates. Any proclamation of an event to happen at a specific time is an indication of fraud.

9) Highly evolved spirits express themselves simply without prolixity. Their style is concise without excluding poetry in their ideas and expressions. They are clear and intelligible to everyone and do not require effort to be understood. They possess the art of saying much in a few words, for every word has its just use. Less evolved or pseudo-scholar spirits, on the other hand, hide the emptiness of their ideas behind pompous phrases. Their language is always pretentious, ridiculous or obscure by dint of appearing profound.

10) Good spirits never give orders. They do not wish to impose themselves, but only to provide counsel. If they are not listened to, they withdraw. Evil spirits are authoritarian; they give orders, want to be obeyed and do not withdraw no matter what. All spirits who impose themselves betray their status. They are exclusivist and absolute in their opinions and pretend to be privileged with the truth. They demand blind trust and never appeal to reason since they know that reason will unmask them.

11) Good spirits are never flattering. They approve of any good that is done, but always prudently. Evil ones use exaggerated praise, and excite pride and vanity – though they proclaim humility – and they seek to *exalt the personal importance* of those whom they want to win over.

12) High order spirits remain above formal puerilities *in all matters*. Ordinary spirits are the only ones who give importance to

trifling details that are incompatible with truly elevated ideas. *Every meticulous prescription* is a sure sign of inferiority and deception on the part of a spirit who employs a pompous name.

13) We must distrust any bizarre and ridiculous names used by certain spirits who want to impose their credibility. It would be extremely absurd to take such names seriously.

14) We must equally distrust spirits who lightly present themselves using highly venerated names, and only with much reserve should we accept what they say. It is especially in such a case that strict control becomes indispensable, because it is frequently a mask that they wear to lead us to believe in their pretended intimate relationships with pure spirits. In this way they flatter the vanity of the medium and take advantage of it to induce him or her to lamentable and foolish acts.

15) Good spirits are very scrupulous regarding the attitudes they wish to advise. In every case, they only have *a serious and eminently useful purpose* in mind. Thus, we must regard with suspicion all advice which does not display this character or which reason would condemn, and we must maturely reflect before accepting it; otherwise, we open ourselves to unfortunate deception.

16) Good spirits may also be recognized by their prudent reserve when touching upon matters that may compromise us. Unveiling evil is repugnant to them, whereas frivolous or malefic spirits love exposing it. While good spirits seek to mitigate error and proclaim indulgence, evil ones exaggerate it and breathe discord through harmful insinuations.

17) Good spirits teach only what is good. Every maxim, every bit of advice *that does not strictly conform to the purest evangelical charity* could not come from a good spirit.

18) Good spirits only provide perfectly reasonable advice. Every recommendation that departs from the *straight line of*

common sense or the immutable laws of nature betrays the presence of a narrow-minded spirit and is therefore unworthy of trust.

19) Plainly evil or simply imperfect spirits also reveal themselves through physical signs that should not deceive anyone. Their action upon a medium is sometimes violent, provoking brusque and jerking movements, a feverish and convulsive agitation that contrasts with the calm and gentleness of good spirits.

20) Imperfect spirits often take advantage of the means of communication at their disposal to offer bad counsel, and they arouse distrust and animosity among those whom they dislike. Anyone who might unmask their deceit is especially a target of their malevolence.

Frail individuals become the target of their efforts and are led by them into evil. They alternately use sophisms, sarcasm, abuse and even physical proof of their occult power to better convince such victims and turn them from the way of truth.

21) The spirits of persons who have had a sole physical or moral preoccupation on the earth, who have not yet managed to free themselves from the influence of matter, continue to be dominated by earthly ideas. Consequently, they bring with them some of the prejudices and predilections, and *even the same manias* they had while living on this world. This is easy to recognize by their language.

22) The knowledge with which certain spirits often use to adorn themselves with a sort of ostentation is no sign of superiority. The true touchstone for verifying superiority is the inalterable purity of their moral sentiments.

23) It is not enough to simply question a spirit in order to know the truth. We must above all know whom we are addressing, for due to their own ignorance, less evolved spirits deal light-heartedly with the most serious questions.

It is also not enough for a spirit to have been a great individual while on earth to subsequently be possessed of high knowledge in

the spirit world. Only virtue can purify it, bring it closer to God and broaden its knowledge.

24) The pleasantries of highly evolved spirits are often subtle and keen, but never banal. Among mocking spirits – those who are not too crass – biting sarcasm is almost always apropos.

25) By attentively studying the character of the spirits who manifest themselves – especially from the moral point of view – we can recognize their nature and the degree of trust they deserve. Common sense can never be deceived.

26) In order to judge both spirits and individuals, we must first know how to judge ourselves. Unfortunately, there are people who make their own opinions the exclusive measuring stick for good and evil, truth and falsehood. Everything that contradicts their way of seeing things, their ideas, or the theory they have invented or adopted, is bad in their sight. Such individuals obviously lack the first condition for correct evaluation: rectitude of judgment. However, they do not even realize it. This is the defect that produces the most illusion.

All the above instructions are the result of experience and the teaching of the Spirits. We shall supplement them with the answers provided by the Spirits themselves with regards to the most important points.

Questions concerning the Nature and Identity of Spirits

268. 1) *By what signs can we recognize high order and low order spirits?*

“By their language, just as you distinguish between a scatterbrain and a sensible person. We have already stated that high order spirits never contradict one another and they only

address worthy matters. They only desire goodness – that is their sole preoccupation.

“Less evolved spirits are still dominated by their materialistic thinking. Their manifestations bear out their ignorance and imperfection. Only highly evolved spirits understand all things and judge them without passion.”

2) *Is a spirit's scientific knowledge always a proof of its elevation?*

“No, because if it is still under the influence of matter, it could still possess your vices and prejudices. There are people in your world who are excessively jealous and proud. Do you think they lose these defects when they leave the earth behind? After they have departed it – especially those who nourished strong passions – they are enveloped by a kind of atmosphere that retains all such evil things.

“These semi-imperfect spirits are to be more feared than downright evil ones because most of them combine astuteness and pride with intelligence. Their pretended knowledge enables them to impose themselves on simple and uneducated individuals, who accept their absurd and erroneous theories without examining them. Although these theories cannot possibly prevail against the truth, they nevertheless produce a temporary evil, because they hinder the progress of Spiritism, and because mediums voluntarily close their eyes to the worth of the communications they receive. This point demands great study on the part of both enlightened Spiritists and mediums. All attention should be geared toward distinguishing between truth and error.”

3) *Many protector spirits present themselves using names of saints or well-known personages. What are we to think of this?*

“All the names of saints and well-known personages are not sufficient to designate the protector of each individual. There are very few spirits with names that are recognized on the earth. That is why they hardly ever give their names. Nonetheless, most of the

time you would like a name, so in order to satisfy you they take the name of someone you know and respect.”

4) *Can't such name-borrowing be regarded as fraudulent?*

“It would be fraudulent if done by an evil spirit with the intent to deceive. However, if it is done with good intentions, God allows it among spirits of the same order, since there is solidarity and similarity of thought among them.”

5) *So when a protector spirit presents itself as St. Paul, for example, we cannot be certain that it is actually the spirit or soul of the apostle by that name?*

“Of course not, for there are thousands of people who have been told that they have St. Paul or some other saint as their guardian angel. But what does it matter as long as the spirit protecting you is of the same order as the apostle Paul? I have already told you that you need a name, and spirits use one in order for you to call them and recognize them. You do the same with the baptismal names you use for distinguishing yourselves from the other members of your family. Spirits can also take the names of the archangels Rafael, Michael, etc. without adverse consequences.

“Moreover, the more highly evolved a spirit is, the more its power of radiation increases. You should know that a high order protector spirit can watch over hundreds of incarnates. On earth there are lawyers who manage the business dealings of a hundred or two hundred families. Why would we be any less capable, spiritually speaking, of morally guiding humans than those who guide their material interests?”

6) *Why do communicating spirits so often use the names of saints?*

“To identify with the customs of those to whom they address themselves. They employ the names most capable of impressing individuals according to their beliefs.”

7) *Upon being evoked, do certain high order spirits always answer in person, or do they send agents to transmit their thought, as some people think?*

“Why wouldn’t they answer in person if they could? But if a spirit cannot answer in person, an agent will necessarily speak in its name.”

8) *Is the agent always sufficiently enlightened to respond as the spirit itself would?*

“Highly evolved spirits know to whom they can entrust the duty of acting as their substitutes. Moreover, the more evolved spirits are, the more they harmonize with one another in common thought in such a way that personality does not matter, as it shouldn’t among you either. Do you think that in the world of high order spirits there are only those whom you deemed on earth as being capable of instructing you? You are so inclined to believe that there is nothing beyond your own world that you resemble primitives who have never left their island and think that the world does not extend beyond it.”

9) *We can understand this to be the case when addressing serious teachings, but why do elevated spirits allow low order spirits to use respectable names to sow error through often-perverse maxims?*

“They do not do so with their permission. Doesn’t the same happen among you? You can be sure that those who deceive in this way will be punished, and their punishment will be in proportion to the seriousness of their fraud. Besides, if you were not imperfect, you would have only good spirits surrounding you. If you are deceived, you have no one to blame but yourselves. God allows it to test your perseverance and discernment in order to teach you how to distinguish truth from error. If you can’t, it is because you are not sufficiently elevated and you need further lessons from experience.”

10) *Aren’t spirits of little advancement, but who are animated by good intentions and the desire to progress, sometimes delegated to replace a high order spirit in order to practice the art of teaching?*

“Never in big centers³⁶; I mean, in serious centers, and for a general order of teaching. The spirits who appear there do so on their own account and, as you say, in order to practice. That is why their communications, though good, always bear the mark that indicates they are less evolved. They are delegated for such a purpose only to give communications of secondary importance and for those that we may call personal.”

11) *Ridiculous spirit communications are sometimes mixed in with worthy maxims. How can we resolve this anomaly, which seems to indicate the simultaneous presence of both good and evil spirits?*

“Evil or frivolous spirits also pronounce maxims but without really realizing the reach or meaning of what they say. Are all those who do this amongst you superior individuals? No, good and evil spirits do not mix together. You can recognize the presence of good spirits by the constant uniformity in good communications.”

12) *Are the spirits who induce us to error always aware of what they are doing?*

“No. There are good but ignorant spirits, who nonetheless can unknowingly be deceptive. When they become aware of their insufficiency, they acknowledge it and only say what they know.”

13) *Does a spirit always have malicious intentions when it communicates error?*

“No. If it is a frivolous spirit, it deceives with no other purpose than to entertain itself.”

14) *Since certain spirits can deceive us with their language, can they also assume a false appearance for seeing mediums?*

“That happens, but it is more difficult. In all cases it is only for a purpose that the evil spirits themselves do not know about, since they are being used as instruments for a lesson. A seeing medium can see frivolous and lying spirits just as other mediums can hear them or write under their influence. Frivolous spirits can

³⁶ Spiritist centers – Tr.

take advantage of the medium's faculty in order to deceive him or her with a false appearance, but it depends on the qualities of the medium's own spirit."

15) *Are good intentions sufficient in order not to be deceived, and if so, could truly serious persons, who do not mix idle curiosity into their studies, also be exposed to fraud?*

"Less than others, obviously. But men and women always display a few weaknesses that attract mocking spirits. They think they are strong but they almost never are. They should distrust themselves for the weakness arising from their pride and prejudices. They hardly ever take these two causes into consideration, and spirits take advantage of this fact. By flattering their weaknesses, they are sure to succeed."

16) *Why does God allow evil spirits to communicate and say bad things?*

"Even the worst communication can provide you a lesson. It is up to you to know how to discern it. All kinds of communications are necessary to teach you how to distinguish between good and evil spirits, and also to serve you as a mirror."

17) *Can spirits suggest unjust reasons for distrust against certain persons through written communications and estrange friends from each other?*

"Perverse and jealous spirits can practice the same evils that humans practice; thus, you must always be on guard. Highly evolved spirits are always prudent and reserved when they admonish you; they say nothing evil – they warn with tact. If they want two individuals to stop seeing each other for their own good, they will cause incidents that separate them in a natural way. An utterance that sows discord and distrust always comes from an evil spirit no matter what name it uses. Hence, always be suspicious when a spirit says something bad against another, especially when a good spirit has already said the opposite. Also distrust yourselves

and your own aversions. Accept only spirit communications that are good, grand, beautiful and reasonable, and what your own conscience approves of.”

18) *Due to the ease with which evil spirits infiltrate communications, can we ever be certain as to the truth?*

“Yes, you can, because you can use your reason to judge them. Whenever you read a letter, you know very well if it was written by a low-life or a well-bred person, a fool or a sage. Why should it be different with spirits who write to you? If you receive a letter from a distant friend, how do you know it is actually from him or her? The penmanship, you will say. But aren’t there forgers who imitate every type of handwriting, and rogues who can know your business dealings? Nevertheless, there are signs that will prevent you from being deceived. The same applies to spirits. Pretend that it is a friend who is writing to you, or that you are dealing with the work of some author, and judge it accordingly.”

19) *Could high order spirits prevent evil ones from using false names?*

“Of course they could, but the worse the spirits are, the more obstinate they are and the more frequently they resist injunctions. You should know, however, that high order spirits take more of an interest in certain individuals than others, and when they deem it necessary they know how to keep them from lies. Deceiving spirits are powerless against such persons.”

20) *What is the reason for this partiality?*

“It is not partiality but justice. Good spirits are interested in those who profit from their counsels and make serious efforts to improve themselves. They favor these persons and help them, but they do not bother with those who waste their time with flowery speech.”

21) *Why does God allow spirits to commit the sacrilege of falsely using venerable names?*

“You may as well ask why God allows people to lie and blaspheme. Like people, spirits have their free will to use for good or ill, but neither group will escape God’s justice.”

22) *Are there any formulas that are effective for expelling deceiving spirits?*

“A formula is physical. A good thought directed toward God is worth much more.”

23) *Some spirits have said that they possess written signs that cannot be imitated – a kind of stamp by which they can be recognized and prove their identity. Is this true?*

“The only signs highly evolved spirits possess for their identity are the loftiness of their ideas and their language. Any spirit can imitate a physical trait. As for less evolved spirits, they betray themselves in so many different ways that only someone who is blind could be deceived by them.”

24) *Can’t deceiving spirits also imitate thought?*

“They imitate thought as theater scenes imitate nature.”

25) *Is it always easy to detect fraud by a careful examination?*

“Absolutely. Spirits can only deceive those who allow themselves to be deceived. Nevertheless, the eyes of a jeweler are needed to tell a true gem from a fake, and whoever does not know how to do so must go to a lapidary.”

26) *There are persons who allow themselves to be seduced by flowery language, who are more interested in words than ideas, and who misstate erroneous and common ideas as sublime. Since they are so inept at judging other people’s work, how can they possibly judge spirits’ work?*

“When they are modest enough to recognize their insufficiency, they do not rely on themselves. When out of pride they regard themselves as more capable than they really are, they pay the penalty for their foolish vanity. Fraudulent spirits know whom they are dealing with. There are simple persons with little

education who are more difficult to deceive than some who are smart and scholarly. By flattering their vanity, spirits do with them as they please.”

27) *Through their written communications, do evil spirits sometimes betray themselves with involuntary, material physical signs?*

“The really skillful ones, no. The inept ones become confused. Any meaningless and puerile sign is sure to indicate inferiority. High order spirits do nothing useless.”

28) *Many mediums recognize good and evil spirits by either a pleasant or disagreeable sensation as they approach. Is a disagreeable impression, a convulsive agitation or uneasiness always indicative of the evil nature of manifesting spirits?*

“A medium experiences the sensations of the state of the manifesting spirit. When the spirit is happy, its state is peaceful, light and calm; when unhappy, it is agitated and feverish, and this agitation is naturally transmitted to the medium’s nervous system. Moreover, the same applies to humans – those who are moral display calmness and peace; those who are evil are always agitated.”

There are mediums of greater or lesser impressionability, and for that reason we cannot consider agitation as an absolute rule. Herein, as in everything else, we must take the circumstances into account. The heavy and disagreeable nature of the sensation is produced by contrast because if the medium’s spirit sympathizes with the evil spirit who manifests, it will barely be affected if at all. However, we must not confuse the speed of writing produced by the extreme flexibility of certain mediums with the convulsive agitation that slower mediums can experience upon contacting imperfect spirits.

CHAPTER XXV



Evocations

• General Considerations • Spirits Who May Be Evoked • The proper Manner of Speaking to Spirits • The Usefulness of Private Evocations • Questions concerning Evocations • The Evocation of Animals • Evocations of Living Persons • Human Telegraphy

General Considerations

269. Spirits can communicate either spontaneously or by answering our call; i.e., they can be evoked. Some persons think that spirits should not be evoked at all, that it is preferable to wait for one who wants to communicate. They believe that in calling a certain spirit we cannot be sure that it is who it claims to be, whereas one who comes on its own initiative better proves its identity since it thus shows its desire to converse with us. In our view that is a mistake, first of all because we are always surrounded by spirits, most of whom are less evolved and who are eager to communicate. Second, it is for that very reason that if we do not evoke a particular spirit, we open the door for all those who would like to enter. In an assembly where no one in particular is given the floor, it would be open to everyone and we know what the

results of that would be. By directly appealing to a certain spirit we establish a link between us: we have called it by our will, and thus have set up a sort of barrier to intruders. Without a direct appeal, a spirit would often have no reason to come to us unless it was our own familiar spirit.

Both of these types of evocation have their advantages, however, and there would only be problems if one of them were excluded. Spontaneous communications present no problems when we are in control of the spirits and are certain that we do not allow evil ones to dominate. So it is almost always appropriate to await the willingness of the spirits who want to manifest because in this way their thought does not experience any restraint and we can receive admirable communications, whereas a spirit who is evoked may not be disposed to communicate at all or might be incapable of communicating in the way we want it to. Moreover, the scrupulous examination that we have advised is a guarantee against bad communications. During regular Spiritist meetings, especially when a sequential work is involved, there are always spirits who come without our having to call them for the simple reason that they are accustomed to the regularity of the sessions. They nearly always appear spontaneously to address some subject, develop a theme or provide guidance. In such cases, it is easy to recognize them whether by their language – because it is always the same – by their writing or by certain peculiar habits.

270. When we want to communicate with one *particular* spirit it is absolutely necessary to evoke it (see no. 203). If it can answer, we usually receive the response: *Yes* or *I am here* or *What would you like of me?* Sometimes it enters directly upon the subject, responding to the questions that we intend to ask before we have had a chance to do so.

When a spirit is evoked for the first time, it is proper to address it as precisely as possible. Questions formulated in a

curt and imperative way should be avoided because they could be a motive for it to stay away. Questions should be affable and respectful, proper to the particular spirit, and in all cases show the benevolence of the evoker.

271. We are often surprised at how quickly an evoked spirit appears, even for the first time. One might say that it had been forewarned. That is in fact what happens when we are preoccupied beforehand with evoking it. This preoccupation is a sort of anticipated evocation, and since our familiar spirits are always nearby and attuned to our thought, they prepare for its coming, so that if there are no obstacles, the spirit is already present upon being evoked. Otherwise, the familiar spirit of the medium or the questioner, or one of those who is normally present, will go look for it, which does not require much time. If the evoked spirit cannot come immediately, a messenger (the pagans used to call it *Mercury*) sets a time – five minutes, a quarter hour, an hour or even several days hence. When the spirit finally arrives, it will say, “I’m here.” Then, we can begin to ask our questions.

The messenger is not always a necessary intermediary, because the evoker’s appeal can be heard directly by the spirit, as will be explained in no. 282, quest. 5, concerning the method of transmitting thought.

When we recommended that the evocation be made in the name of God, we meant for this recommendation to be taken seriously and not lightly. Anyone who thinks it is a meaningless formula would be better off to refrain from making the evocation altogether.

272. Evocations often present more difficulties to mediums than spontaneous dictations, especially when trying to obtain precise responses to circumstantial questions. To do so, special mediums are necessary who are both *flexible* and *positive*, and

we have already seen (no.193) that they are very rare, because as we have also already stated, fluidic connections cannot always be instantaneously established with the first spirit who puts in its appearance. Thus, mediums should not become involved in evocations for detailed questions without being sure about the development of their faculties and the nature of the spirits who answer, since if the mediums are not surrounded by good spirits, the evocations cannot be of an authentic character.

273. Mediums are normally more sought out for evocations involving private interests than for evocations of a general interest. This may be explained by the very natural desire to converse with loved ones. We think that it would be wise to make several important recommendations to mediums about this matter. First, they should not over-willingly accede to this desire when it involves individuals whose sincerity is not certain, and they should be on guard against traps that malevolent persons could set for them. Second, they should not, under any circumstance, rush into an evocation if they intuitively sense mere curiosity and self-interest rather than a serious intention on the part of the evoker, and they should refuse to propose any idle question or one that is not within the ambit of those that may be rationally proposed to spirits. Questions should be asked clearly and precisely, without ulterior motives, in order to obtain categorical responses. Any questions of an insidious character should be rejected because spirits do not appreciate questions that might put them to the test. To insist on questions of this nature is the same as to want to be deceived. The evoker should frankly and openly stick to the purpose without subterfuge and meaningless detours. If the evoker is afraid to explain him or herself, it would be better to abstain.

It is also best to be very cautious when making evocations in the absence of those who request them, and most of the time it is best not to make them at all. The reason is that only such persons

are capable of controlling the responses, of judging the identity of the spirit, eliciting clarifications aroused by the answers and asking occasional questions to which the circumstances might lead. Furthermore, their presence is a link which attracts the spirit, who is normally little disposed to communicate with strangers for whom it has no affinity. To sum up: mediums should avoid anything that might transform them into consultation instruments, which for most people is equivalent to fortune tellers.

Spirits Who May Be Evoked

274. We may evoke all spirits no matter to which degree of the scale they belong: good ones and evil ones, those who recently departed life or those who lived in the most distant past, illustrious persons or the most obscure, our relatives, friends and those who are not related to us. This, however, does not imply that they will always want to answer our appeal or that they even can. Regardless of their own desire or request, which may be refused by a higher power, they can be prevented by reasons that we cannot always understand. What we mean to say is that there is no impediment to communications per se – except what we will deal with next. Obstacles to manifestation are almost always of an individual nature and frequently result from the circumstances.

275. Among the causes that can interfere with a spirit's manifestation, some are proper to the spirit itself, while others are outside it. Among the former we should place the occupations or missions in which it is involved, and from which it cannot leave in order to answer to our own desires. In this case its manifestation is merely postponed.

Moreover, there is also its own situation to consider. Although incarnation per se is not an absolute obstacle, it can comprise an

impediment on certain occasions, particularly if it has occurred on a less evolved world, or if the spirit itself is little-dematerialized. On higher worlds, where the ties that bind the spirit to matter are very fragile, manifestation for the spirit is almost as easy as during the errant state, and in every case easier than on worlds where corporeal matter is more compact.

Outside causes have mostly to do with the nature of the medium, that of the evoker, the environment where the evocation occurs and, finally, the purpose of the evocation. Some mediums very easily receive communications from their familiar spirit, who may be more evolved or less so, whereas others are capable of serving as intermediaries for all spirits. It all depends on the sympathy or antipathy, the attraction or repulsion that the medium's spirit exerts over the one being evoked, who may willingly or very unwillingly use it as its interpreter. Without taking the personal qualities of mediums into account, it also depends on the development of their mediumship; spirits come more willingly and are especially more precise with mediums who do not offer any material obstacles. Whenever there is equality of moral conditions, then the more capable mediums are to write or otherwise express themselves, the broader their relationships with the spirit world.

276. We must further consider the ease that arises from habitually communicating with a particular spirit. Over time the communicating spirit identifies with both the medium's spirit and the evoker's spirit. Regardless of the issue of sympathy, they establish fluidic ties that make communicating easier. This is why the first manifestation is not always as satisfactory as we may desire, and also why the spirits themselves always ask to be evoked again. A spirit who customarily manifests feels at home: it has become familiar with the audience and the interpreters; it speaks and acts more freely.

277. In sum, what we have just explained means that the ability to evoke any and every spirit does not imply that a particular spirit is obligated to be at our disposal. It may answer us on one occasion but not on another; it may work with a particular medium or evoker who pleases it, but not with another; it can say what it wants without being coerced to say what it does not want to say; it can withdraw at any time, and finally, for reasons depending on its own will or of another, after having been cooperative for some time, it can suddenly cease to appear any more.

For these reasons, whenever we want to evoke a new spirit, we must ask our protector guide if the evocation is possible. If it is not, the guide usually states its reasons for the hindrance, and then it would be futile to insist.

278. Here, an important question arises as to whether or not it is proper to evoke evil spirits. This depends on the purpose and the ascendancy one has over them. It is not improper when evoking them for a serious purpose, for instructing and helping them improve themselves. On the other hand, it is highly improper when done out of mere curiosity or for entertainment, or if we put ourselves at their disposal by asking them some favor. Good spirits in this case may very well give evil spirits the power to do what has been asked of them, but reserve the right of later severely punishing the audacious persons who dared invoke their aid, considering them more powerful than God. It would be a vain intent to promise to use the aid for a good purpose and to dismiss the spirit servant once and for all after the service has been rendered. Such service, no matter how small, represents a true pact with evil spirits, and they do not easily relinquish their prey. (See no. 212)

279. Only through *moral superiority* may one exert ascendancy over less evolved spirits. Perverse spirits recognize the superiority of morally upright men and women. When facing

people who try to oppose their fierce energy using only their own willpower, they react against such persons with a kind of brute force and often prove to be the stronger. A certain individual, who thus sought to dominate a rebellious spirit through willpower, received this response: *“Leave me alone with your braggart airs. You are no better than me. What would you say about one thief preaching morality to another?”*

It may seem very surprising that when the name of God is invoked against such spirits it hardly ever has any effect. St. Louis explains the reason for this in the following response:

“The name of God only has any influence over imperfect spirits when the one who invokes it can do so with the authority of his or her own virtues. Coming from the mouth of someone who is morally no better than the spirit, it is just an ordinary word like any other. The same applies to sacred objects used to oppose them. The most terrible weapon is inoffensive in hands that are unable or incapable of using it.”

The Proper Manner of Speaking to Spirits

280. The degree to which spirits have evolved naturally indicates the tone in which we should speak to them. It is obvious that the more elevated they are, the more they deserve our respect, consideration and submission. We should treat them with no less deference than if they were still incarnate, but for other reasons: during terrestrial life we would consider their job and their social position, whereas in the spirit world we only respect them for their moral superiority. This elevation in itself places them above the puerilities of our formal flatterings. We will not win their benevolence with mere words but with sincere sentiments. Therefore, it would be ridiculous to give them the titles we use to distinguish positions, and which in life would please their vanity.

If they are truly superior, they not only assign little importance to these titles, but they also find them disagreeable. A moral thought pleases them more than flattering epithets; otherwise, they would not be above ordinary humanity. The spirit of a venerable priest, who was a “prince of the church” while on earth, and who practiced the teachings of Jesus, responded to someone who evoked him by the title of ‘my Lord’: “You should at least say “ex-My Lord”, for here there is only one Lord, who is God. You should know very well that there are those here who kneeled before me while on earth, but whom I kneel before now.”

When addressing low order spirits, their particular character determines the language we should employ. Among them are those who may be inoffensive and even benevolent but who are nevertheless frivolous, ignorant or foolish. To address them like serious spirits as some people do would be the same as if we were to bow before a grade school student or a donkey wearing a doctoral hood. A casual tone is certainly not strange to them, nor does it offend them. On the contrary, that is what they prefer.

Among the less evolved spirits are those who are unhappy. Whatever the wrongs they are expiating, their sufferings deserve our pity all the more, for no one escapes these words of Christ: “Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.” Treating them with benevolence is consoling to them. In their need of sympathy, they ought to find in us the same tolerance that we would want for ourselves.

Spirits who show how little-evolved they are through their cynical language, lies, base sentiments and perfidious advice are certainly less worthy of our interest than those whose words display their repentance, but we should nonetheless treat them with at least as much pity as the great criminals inspire in us. The way to reduce them to silence is by showing that we are of a higher order than they because they only establish relationships with persons

of whom they have nothing to fear. Perverse spirits recognize the superiority of moral individuals just as they recognize the superiority of high order spirits.

To summarize: it would be irreverent to treat high order spirits as our equals just as it would be ridiculous to show the same deference to all spirits without exception. We should venerate those who deserve it, recognize those who protect and assist us, and show the others the same benevolence that we ourselves might need someday. By unveiling the incorporeal world we learn to understand it, and this understanding should guide our relationships with its inhabitants. In their ignorance, the ancients raised altars to them; for us, they are creatures who may be more purified or less so than we ourselves are, and it is to God alone that we raise altars.

The Usefulness of Private Evocations

281. Communications with highly evolved spirits or those who animated great personages in antiquity are valuable for their elevated teachings. These spirits have reached a degree of purification that enables them to embrace a wider circle of ideas, to unveil mysteries that surpass human possibilities, and to thereby initiate us better than other spirits could into certain matters. However, this does not mean that communications with lower order spirits are worthless, because the observer can definitely learn from them. To understand the customs of a nation one must study it on every level. Whoever observes it in only one of its aspects does not understand it well at all. The history of a nation is not the history of its monarchs or its authorities; rather, to form an opinion about it, we must research the life of its people and their particular customs. Thus, high order spirits are the authorities of the spirit world, and their very elevation places them above us

in such a way that we are amazed at the distance that separates them from us. The more *bourgeois* spirits (may they forgive us for this expression) make the conditions of their new existence more palpable to us. Their connection between the corporeal and spirit life is narrower, and we can comprehend it better because it touches us more closely. By learning directly from them about what they have become, what they think about and what individuals of all conditions and characters experience – moral and cruel, great and small, happy and unhappy individuals of our own times – in a word: those who have lived among us, whom we have seen and known, whose real lives we have witnessed with its virtues and errors, we better understand their joys and sufferings; we share in both and receive a moral lesson from both. This lesson is more profitable the more intimate are the connections between the spirits and us, since it is easier for us to put ourselves in the place of one who is our equal than in that of another whom we only see through the mirage of celestial glory. Ordinary spirits show us the practical results of the great and sublime truths, which the high order spirits give us in theory. Moreover, nothing is worthless in the study of a science. Newton discovered the laws of universal forces by observing the simplest phenomena.

Evoking ordinary spirits has a further advantage in that it puts us in contact with suffering spirits – those whom we may comfort and help with good counsels in their advancement. Thus, we can be useful while we learn. To seek only our own satisfaction in our relationships with spirits would be plain selfish, and those who fail to extend a helping hand to the unfortunate only prove their own pride. What good would it do to obtain fine communications from elevated spirits if doing so does not render us better, more charitable and more benevolent toward our brothers and sisters of this and the other world? What would become of impoverished diseased persons if doctors refused to touch their open sores?

Questions concerning Evocations

282. 1) *Could someone evoke spirits without being a medium?*

“Everyone can evoke spirits. Even though they might not be able to manifest materially, they may nevertheless approach and listen to the evoker.”

2) *Will a spirit who is evoked always answer when called?*

“It depends on its situation because there are circumstances in which it is unable to answer.”

3) *What causes may prevent its coming?*

“First, its own will; next, its corporeal state if it is incarnate, its mission or, perhaps, prohibition to appear.

There are also spirits who can never communicate, who because of their nature still inhabit worlds less evolved than earth. Furthermore, those on globes of punishment cannot communicate unless they have received permission from higher up, which is only granted in cases of general usefulness. In order for a spirit to communicate, it must have reached the degree of evolution of the world to which it is called because otherwise it will be foreign to the culture of such world and will not have the means of comparison available for expressing itself. This does not apply to those who have been sent on a mission or for expiation to less evolved worlds, because they possess the ideas needed for responding.”

4) *For what reasons might a spirit be denied permission to communicate?*

“It may be a trial or punishment for it or for the one who calls it.”

5) *Can spirits, who are scattered throughout space or on different worlds, hear the evocations that are directed to them from all points of the universe?*

“They are frequently informed by the familiar spirits, who surround you and who go look for them. However, in such a case

there is a phenomenon that is difficult to explain to you, for you cannot yet comprehend the way thought is transmitted between spirits. Nevertheless, what I can say is that the evoked spirit, no matter how far away, receives an impulse of thought, so to speak, like a kind of electric shock, which calls its attention to the direction from which the thought has been addressed to it. We may say that it understands thought in the same way that you understand a voice.”

– *Is the universal fluid the vehicle for thought in the same way that air is the vehicle for sound?*

Yes, with the difference that sound can only be heard over a very short distance, whereas thought reaches the infinite. A spirit in space is like a traveler, who, in the middle of a vast plain, suddenly hears his name and turns in the direction from where he has been called.”

6) *We know that distances mean nothing to spirits, but we marvel at seeing them sometimes respond so quickly to the call – almost as if they were already close by.*

“Sometimes they really were. If the evocation was premeditated, the spirit has been forewarned and frequently is present before being called.”

7) *Does the ease with which the evoker is heard depend on the circumstances?*

“Undoubtedly. A spirit who is called with a thought of sympathy and benevolence is more moved by it. It is as if it recognizes the voice of a friend. If not called in this manner, often the evocation *cannot proceed*. The thought emitted through evocation touches the spirit, but if badly directed it becomes lost in a vacuum. This also happens among individuals: if the one addressed is not interested or is even antipathetic, he or she might hear but most of the time will not answer.”

8) *Does an evoked spirit manifest voluntarily or is it constrained to do so?*

“It obeys the will of God, that is, the general laws governing the universe. Nonetheless, “constrained” is not the right word, since it deems whether or not it is convenient to answer, and in doing so it exerts its own free will. A high order spirit will always answer if called for a useful purpose. It will only refuse to respond at meetings of non-serious persons, or those who try to evoke it as a means of entertainment.”

9) *Can an evoked spirit refuse to answer?*

“Of course. If not, how could it have free will? Do you think that all the spirits in the universe are at your beck and call? Do you yourselves feel obligated to respond to everybody who calls out your name? However, when I say that it may refuse, I am referring to the evoker’s request, because a low order spirit can be constrained by a higher order one to manifest.”

10) *Does the evoker have any means to force the spirit to answer in spite of itself?*

“Not if the spirit is morally equal or superior – I say *morally* and not intellectually – because in that case you would have no authority over it at all. If it is morally inferior, however, you can make it appear for its own good, for then other spirits will help you.” (See no. 279)

11) *Would it be improper to evoke low order spirits, and could there be any danger that they might dominate the evoker?*

“They only dominate those who allow them to. Evokers who are assisted by good spirits have nothing to be afraid of, since they dominate low order spirits – not the other way around. Whenever mediums are alone, they should avoid this type of evocation, especially if they are beginners.” (See no. 278)

12) *Is there any special kind of inner state necessary for evocations?*

“The best state is one of contemplation when one wants to communicate with serious spirits. With faith and a desire for

goodness one is more able to evoke high order spirits. By lifting the soul in a few moments of contemplation at the time of evocation one identifies with good spirits and makes them more amenable to coming.”

13) *Is faith necessary for evocations?*

“Faith in God, yes. For everything else, faith will develop with the desire for goodness and the intention of being taught.”

14) *When men and women are united in thought and intent are they more able to evoke spirits?*

“Whenever all are united through charity and for good purposes, they achieve great things. Nothing is more harmful to evocations than differences of thought.”

15) *Is it a useful precaution to join hands for a few minutes at the start of meetings in order to form a current?*

“A current is a physical method that produces no unity among you if there is no corresponding unity of thought. It is more effective to be united in a common thought with each participant appealing to the good spirits. You have no idea of what you could obtain during a serious meeting in which there is no trace of pride or self-importance, but only a perfect sentiment of mutual cordiality.”

16) *Is it preferable to make evocations at certain days and hours?*

“Yes. If possible in the same place as well. Then, spirits more willingly appear. Your constant wish is what helps spirits to come and communicate with you. They have their own concerns, which they cannot suddenly leave *unexpectedly* for your personal satisfaction. When I say “in the same place”, I am not implying an absolute condition, because spirits can go anywhere. What I mean is that it is preferable to have a place dedicated to meetings because it leads to better contemplation.”

17) *Do certain objects like medallions and talismans have any property for attracting or repelling spirits as some people claim?*

“That is a pointless question, since you know that matter exerts no influence over spirits. You can be sure that no good spirit ever offered such absurd advice. The virtue of talismans of any nature only exists in the mind of superstitious individuals.”

18) *What do you think about spirits who set appointments in gloomy places at inconvenient times?*

“They are spirits who have fun with those who listen to them. It is always useless and frequently dangerous to give into such suggestions: useless, because absolutely nothing can be gained beyond being deceived; dangerous, not because of what the evil spirits might do, but because of the influence they might exert over weak minds.”

19) *Are certain days and hours more propitious for evocations?*

“It does not matter at all to spirits – like everything else material – and it would be superstitious to believe in the influence of certain days and hours. The most propitious times are when evokers are less involved in habitual occupations, and when their body and spirit are calmer.”

20) *Is being evoked pleasant or unpleasant for spirits? Do they willingly answer when we call them?*

“That depends on their character and the reason why you call them. Whenever the objective is praiseworthy and the means are sympathetic, evocation is pleasant and even attractive. Spirits always feel happy with displays of affection. Some consider it a great fortune to be able to communicate with humans and they suffer when they are forgotten by them. However, this also depends on their character, as I have already stated. Among spirits there are misanthropes who do not like being inconvenienced, and whose responses mirror their bad mood, especially when called by individuals whom they do not care about. A particular spirit often has no reason at all to answer the appeal of someone it does not know or toward whom it is indifferent, and who is usually

motivated by curiosity. In such a case, if it answers at all, it is usually in quick appearances – provided there is actually a serious and instructive objective in the evocation.”

We have seen persons who only evoke their relatives in order to ask questions about the most ordinary matters of material life. For example: one wanted to know if he should rent or sell his house; others have wanted to find out what kind of profit they would make on their merchandise, the place where some money was hidden, or if such and such a business would be profitable or not. Our relatives beyond the grave are only interested in us due to the affection we still have for them. If all our thoughts are limited to treating them like fortune tellers, or if we only want information from them, they cannot show much sympathy for us and we should not wonder why they display little kindness toward us.

21) *Is there any difference between good and evil spirits with respect to the willingness with which they answer our call?*

“There is a big difference. Evil spirits only answer willingly when they hope to dominate and deceive; they are very unwilling when they are forced to manifest in order to confess their wrongs, and they try to get away like a school child who is called up to be reprimanded. Nonetheless, they can be forced to manifest by higher order spirits as a punishment and as a lesson for incarnates. Evocation is unpleasant for good spirits when it is for no purpose or for trivialities. They either do not answer at all or soon withdraw.

“Whoever they may be, spirits generally do not like to serve as a distraction for the curious any more than you do. You often have no other purpose for evoking a spirit than to see what it might have to say to you, or to question it about some particularity of its life, which it has no interest in revealing to you because it has no reason to confide in you. Do you think that it likes to be cross examined at your pleasure? Don’t fool

yourselves. What it wouldn't do while alive it will more likely decline to do as a spirit."

Experience, in fact, has shown that evocation is always pleasing to spirits when done for a serious and worthwhile purpose. The good ones take pleasure in teaching us, and the suffering ones are consoled by our sympathy, while those we have known are pleased when we remember them. Frivolous spirits like to be evoked by frivolous persons because it gives them an opportunity to have fun at their expense, but they feel ill at ease in the company of serious individuals.

22) *Do spirits have to be evoked to manifest?*

"No. Most often they manifest without having been called, which shows that they do so of their own accord."

23) *When a spirit manifests without being evoked can we be certain of its identity?*

"Not at all, for deceptive spirits often employ this means in order to better deceive you."

24) *When we evoke a spirit by our thought, will it answer even if it doesn't express itself through writing or some other means?*

"Writing is a physical means by which a spirit shows it is present, but it is thought that attracts it and not the act of writing."

25) *When a less evolved spirit manifests, can we make it withdraw?*

"Yes, by not listening to it. However, how can you expect it to withdraw if you are amused at its *turpitude*? Like the fools among you, low order spirits attach themselves to those who listen to them complacently."

26) *Is evocation in the name of God any guarantee against the interference of evil spirits?*

"God's name does not put all perverse spirits in check, but it restrains many of them. It is a means for you to keep many away, and it is even more effective if pronounced from the bottom of the heart and not as a banal formula."

27) *Can we evoke several spirits at the same time by name?*

“This presents no difficulty. If there are three or four hands to write with, three or four spirits will respond at the same time. This happens when we have several mediums available.”

28) *When several spirits are evoked at once with only one medium present, which one responds?*

“One of them will respond for all and will express the collective thought.”

29) *Can the same spirit communicate at the same time in the same session through two different mediums?*

“As easily as among you, certain individuals can dictate several letters at once.”

We have seen a spirit respond to questions at the same time through two mediums: one writing in French and the other in English, both being identical in meaning and sometimes even literal translations of each other.

Two spirits evoked simultaneously through two mediums may carry on a conversation. However, they do not require this form of communication since they can read each other's thoughts – they do it sometimes for our instruction. If they are little-evolved spirits who are still imbued with earthly passions and notions that they held during their corporeal life, they may argue and shout swearwords, mutually accusing each other of their wrongs, and even throwing pencils, baskets or planchettes at each other.

30) *Can a spirit who is evoked at the same time in several places respond simultaneously to the questions?*

“Yes, if it is a high order spirit.”

– *In such a case does the spirit divide itself up or does it possess the gift of ubiquity?*

“The sun is only one whole, but nevertheless it radiates its light everywhere, projecting its rays far and wide but without

dividing itself. The same applies to spirits. A spirit's thought is like a spark which projects its light afar and which can be seen from every part of the horizon. The purer the spirit is, the more its thought *radiates* and scatters like a light. Less evolved spirits are too dense and cannot respond to more than one person at a time; they cannot answer your evocation at all if they have already been called to another place.

“When called at the same time to two different places, a highly evolved spirit will answer both evocations if they are equally serious and fervent; otherwise, it will favor the more serious one.”

The same thing happens when someone standing in one spot can transmit his or her thought through signals that are visible in many directions.

During one session at the Parisian Society of Spiritist Studies, in which the issue of ubiquity was being discussed, a spirit spontaneously dictated the following:

“You have been discussing the Spirit Hierarchy regarding the issue of ubiquity. You may compare us to a balloon that gradually rises into the air. While it is still near the ground, only a small circle of people can see it, but as it rises, the circle grows larger and when it has reached a certain height, it can be seen by a vast number. The same happens with us. An evil spirit, who is still attached to the earth, remains within a narrow circle of persons who perceive it. As it ascends and improves itself, it will be able to converse with many people. When it finally becomes a highly evolved spirit, it will radiate like the solar light, being perceived by several persons and in several places at the same time.”

Channing

31) *Can pure spirits, who have already completed their series of incarnations, be evoked?*

“Yes, but very rarely, because they only communicate with pure and sincere hearts – none who are *proud or selfish*. Hence, you

must distrust low order spirits who claim to be such spirits in order to seem more important to you.”

32) *How is it possible for the spirits of the most eminent individuals so easily and familiarly to answer the call of the most obscure persons?*

“Humans judge spirits according to their own standards, which is wrong. Earthly status disappears after corporeal death. The sole standard among spirits is goodness, and those who are good can go anywhere where there is a good deed to perform.”

33) *How soon after death can a spirit be evoked?*

“You could evoke it at the very moment of death, but since it may still be in the state of confusion, it will not be able to respond very well.”

Since the duration of the state of confusion varies widely, it is impossible to set a specific timeframe for evocation. Nonetheless, it is rare that a spirit after eight days or so is not sufficiently aware of its state in order to respond. It may even be quite able two or three days after death, but in any case, one should proceed prudently.

34) *Is evocation at the moment of death more troublesome for the spirit than it would be later on?*

“Sometimes. It would be like someone making you get up in the middle of sleep before you are completely awake. Nevertheless, there are some who have no problem at all, and evocation may even help them out of the state of confusion.”

35) *How can the spirit of a child who died at a tender age respond consciously if during its corporeal life it hadn't yet arrived at self-awareness?*

“A child's soul is a spirit *still wrapped in the swaddling clothes of matter*. When it is free of matter, however, it enjoys its spirit faculties, for spirits have no age, which proves that the spirit of the child has already lived before. Nonetheless, until it has been

completely freed from its body, its conversation may still display some childlike characteristics.”

The body’s influence, which may last for some time in the spirit of a child, may also be noted in the spirit of those who have died insane. The spirit itself is not insane, but we know that some spirits continue to believe for awhile that they are still incarnated. Thus, it is no wonder that the spirit of an insane individual may still feel the impediment that had hindered its free manifestation during life until it has been completely freed. This effect varies according to the causes of the insanity, because there are insane persons who immediately recover their lucidity after death.

The Evocation of Animals

283. 36) *Can we evoke the spirit of an animal?*

“The intelligent principle, which had animated the animal, remains in a latent state after death. The spirits in charge of this principle immediately utilize it to animate other beings, through which it will continue the process of its development. Thus, in the spirit world there are no errant animal spirits – only human ones. This answers your question.

– *Then how may it be explained that certain persons have evoked animals and have received responses?*

“Evoke a rock and it will respond. There are always scores of spirits ready to talk for any reason.”

For this same reason, when we evoke a mythological or allegorical personage, it will respond, which actually means that a spirit has responded in its stead. The spirit who presents itself as such a personage will take on its character and mannerisms. Once, someone got the idea to evoke Tartuffe and he soon appeared. What is more, he gave news concerning Orgon, Elmire, Damis and Valère. As for itself, it imitated

Tartuffe with so much skill that it appeared to be a real personage. It later confessed that it had been an actor who had once played the role. Frivolous spirits always take advantage of inexperienced questioners, but they avoid appearing to those who know how to expose their impostures and disbelieve their stories. The same occurs among humans.

A certain gentleman took a keen interest in a nest of goldfinches in his garden. One day, the nest disappeared. He was certain that no one in his household had committed the theft, and since he was a medium, he got the idea to evoke the mother goldfinch. She responded in excellent French, “Don’t accuse anyone and don’t worry about the fate of my little ones. It was the cat that jumped up and knocked over the nest. You can find it out on the lawn along with the chicks, which were not eaten.” The man verified all the details to be correct. Should we therefore conclude that it was the actual bird who had responded? Of course not – simply a spirit who knew what had happened. This shows how much we should distrust appearances and how appropriate the above answer is: evoke a rock and it will respond. (See the chapter *Mediumship in Animals*, no. 234)

Evocations of Living Persons

284. 37) *Does the incarnation of a spirit absolutely prevent evoking it?*

“No, but the condition of its body must allow the spirit to disengage at the time. An incarnate spirit answers more easily when it inhabits a more highly evolved world, where the bodies are less material.”

38) *Can we evoke the spirit of a living person?*

“Yes, since you can evoke an incarnate spirit. During its moments of freedom, the spirit of a living person can also manifest *without being evoked*; it depends on the affinity between the parties involved.” (See no. 116, *Story of the man with the snuff box*)

39) *What is the state of the body of the person whose spirit has been evoked?*

“It sleeps or naps – that is when the spirit is free.”

– *Could it awaken while the spirit is away?*

“No. The spirit must have *returned to the body* first. If it is communicating at the time, it will leave you and often say why.”

40) *How is the spirit warned that it must return to the body?*

“The spirit of a living person is never completely detached from the body. No matter at what distance it may be it continues to be attached by a fluidic cord that serves to recall it when necessary. Only death can break this cord.”

Seeing mediums often perceive this fluidic cord, which is a kind of phosphorescent trail that follows behind the spirit toward the body. Certain spirits have stated that they use it to recognize those who are still in the corporeal world.

41) *What would happen if the body were mortally wounded during sleep and while the spirit was away?*

“The spirit would be warned and would return before death was consummated.”

– *Then couldn't death occur in the absence of the spirit, which upon its return could no longer reenter its body?*

“No, because it would be contrary to the law that governs the union between body and soul.”

– *But what if the body received a sudden blow?*

“The spirit will have been pre-warned before the fatal blow.”

When asked about this, the spirit of a living person responded, “If the body could die while the spirit was away, it would be a very convenient way for committing suicide.”

42) *Can the spirit of a person evoked during sleep communicate as easily as one evoked after death?*

“No. Matter always exerts an influence to some degree.”

The spirit of a person who was questioned while asleep responded, "I am always chained to this iron ball that I have to drag around."

– *During sleep, could a spirit be prevented from answering because it was somewhere else?*

"Yes, the spirit might be someplace where it wants to remain, and will therefore not answer when evoked, especially if by someone in whom it is not interested."

43) *Is it completely impossible to evoke the spirit of someone who is awake?"*

"Although it is difficult, it is not completely impossible, because if the evocation is *effective*, the person might go to sleep. However, the spirit can only communicate as a spirit at times in which its presence is not required for the intelligent activity of the body."

Experiments have proven that evocation during the waking state can cause sleep or at least a state close to sleep. However, this effect can only be produced by a very energetic will and if there are bonds of affinity between the two individuals. Otherwise, the evocation *will not take hold*. Even when the evocation can cause sleep, if the time is inappropriate and the person does not want to sleep, he or she will resist. Even if sleep does occur, the spirit will be troubled and will respond with difficulty. Thus, the best time to evoke a living person is during natural sleep, because the spirit is free and can answer the call just as easily as it could go somewhere else. When the person consents to the evocation and tries to go to sleep, his or her preoccupation with it might delay sleep and disturb the spirit. That is why natural sleep is still preferable.

44) *Does a living person who is evoked remember it upon waking?*

"No. You yourself have been evoked much more often than you think. Only the spirit is aware of it, and sometimes may provide the person with a vague impression of what has happened as if it had been a dream."

– *Who would want to evoke us if we are unknown to him or her?*

“During other lives you could have been a well-known person on this world or on others. Your relatives and friends could also do so on this world and others. Let’s suppose that your spirit had animated the body of someone else’s father. When this person evokes his or her father, it is your spirit who will respond to the evocation.”

45) *Does the spirit of a living person respond as a spirit or with the ideas it has during its waking state?*

“That depends on its elevation, but it regards matters more soundly and with less bias – exactly like somnambulists. The two states are almost identical.”

46) *If the spirit of a somnambulist were evoked during magnetic sleep, would it be more lucid than the spirit of someone else?*

“Of course, it would respond more easily because it would be less attached. Everything depends on the degree of independence between the spirit and the body.”

– *Could a somnambulist’s spirit respond to someone who evoked it from some distant place and at the same time respond verbally to another person?*

“The ability to communicate simultaneously in two different places only belongs to spirits who are completely free of matter.”

47) *Could we change the waking-state ideas of someone by acting upon his or her spirit during sleep?*

“Yes, sometimes. Since in sleep the spirit is not as strictly tied to matter, it is more accessible to mental suggestions that can influence its way of ordinarily seeing things. Unfortunately, what nearly always happens is that upon awakening, the corporeal nature dominates it and makes it forget about the good resolutions that it may have made.”

48) *Is the spirit of a living person free to say or not to say whatever it wants?*

“It is in possession of its spirit faculties and therefore its free will. Since it is more discerning, it is more cautious than during the waking state.”

49) *Could we evoke persons and coerce them into stating something they would rather keep quiet about?*

“As I said, the spirit has free will. Nevertheless, as a spirit it might give less importance to certain matters than in its ordinary state, so its conscience may speak more freely. Moreover, if it does not wish to speak, it can always escape an uncomfortable situation by leaving – no one can retain a spirit as one can retain a body.”

50) *Could the spirit of a living person be constrained by another spirit to appear and speak, as happens with errant spirits?*

“Among the spirits of both the living and the dead there is only one type of supremacy: moral superiority, and you should understand that a high order spirit would never support a cowardly indiscretion.”

Such abuse of trust would in fact be wrong and would thus not yield a good result, because we cannot wrest a secret from a spirit who wants to keep it, unless it were overcome by a sense of justice and confessed something that under other circumstances it would keep quiet about.

One particular individual wanted to find out through such means if one of her relatives had remembered her in his will. The spirit responded, “Yes, my dear little niece, as you shall soon find out.” The niece really had been remembered, but a few days later the relative destroyed the will and was malicious enough to inform his niece about it, although he did not know that he had been evoked. An instinctive feeling had undoubtedly led him to act on the resolution that his spirit had made after the question had been posed. It is pure cowardice to ask the spirit of either a deceased or living person what we would dare not ask the person face to face, and such cowardice never results in the hoped-for compensation.

51) *Can we evoke a spirit whose body is still in the womb?*

“No, because you know that during this phase the spirit is completely confused.”

Incarnation only definitively takes place at the moment the child breathes. However, from the moment of conception the designated spirit is enveloped in a confusion which increases as birth approaches and which erases its self-consciousness. Thus, it cannot respond. (See *The Spirits' Book: The Return to Corporeal Life: The Joining of the Soul with the Body*, no. 344)

52) *Could a deceiving spirit respond in the place of a living person?*

“Certainly, and this frequently happens, especially when the evoker has ulterior motives. Moreover, the evocation of living persons is only useful for psychological study. It should not be done if there is no instructive purpose involved.”

If the evocation of errant spirits does not always *take hold* (to use their own expression), such is even more the case involving incarnate ones. That is when deceiving spirits most often take their place.

53) *Are there drawbacks to evoking living persons?*

“It is not always free of danger, but it depends on their condition. If they are ill, you might increase their misery.”

54) *When is evoking a living person inappropriate?*

“You should not evoke extremely young children, persons who are gravely ill or infirm aged individuals. In other words, it is inappropriate whenever the body is seriously debilitated.”

The abrupt suspension of the intellectual faculties during the waking state could also present a danger if the person at the time required all his or her mental agility.

55) *During evocations of living persons, does their body become tired because of the work of the spirit, even though the body is absent?*

One individual, who had been evoked, affirmed that his body had become tired by responding: “My spirit is like a balloon

attached to a post. My body is the post that is shaken by the jerking movements of the balloon.”

56) *Since the evocation of living persons may be inappropriate when done without taking precautions, isn't there also danger in evoking a spirit who does not know if it is incarnate and who might be in some unfavorable state of affairs?*

“No, the circumstances are not the same. It will only answer if the conditions are right. Moreover, haven't I already said that before making the evocation you should ask if it is possible?”

57) *When, during inconvenient moments, we feel irresistible sleep coming over us, is it because we are being evoked somewhere?*

“It could be, certainly, but most often it should be regarded as a simple physical need, whether because the body needs rest or because the spirit needs its freedom.”

We knew a lady, a medium, who one day got the idea to evoke the spirit of her grandson, who was sleeping in the same room. She confirmed his identity by his language, familiar expressions and a precise report on some things that had happened at boarding school. Then, something else happened to confirm it even further: the medium's hand suddenly stopped mid-sentence and she couldn't write anymore. At that moment the child was stirring half awake on the cot. He soon went back to sleep, and she continued the conversation without interruption. The evocation of living persons, when done under proper conditions, incontestably proves the distinct activity of the spirit and body, and therefore the existence of an intelligent principle that is independent of matter. (See *Revue Spirite* (1860) pp. 11 and 81 for several remarkable examples of evocations of living persons.)

Human Telegraphy

285. 58) *Can two persons evoking each other simultaneously transmit their thought and communicate?*

“Yes, and this *human telegraphy will someday be a universal means of communication.*

– *Why can't it be practiced at present?*

“It already is by some, but not by many. Men and women must *purify themselves* more so that their spirit is freer of matter – a further reason why evocation must be made in God's name. Until then, it will be restricted to *pure souls* and to those who are dematerialized – something that is quite rare in the current state of earth's inhabitants.”



Questions That May Be Addressed to Spirits

- Preliminary Observations • Appropriate and Inappropriate Questions • Questions concerning the Future • Concerning Past and Future Lives • Concerning Moral and Material Interests • Concerning the Fate of Spirits • Concerning Health • Concerning Inventions and Discoveries • Concerning Hidden Treasure • Concerning Other Worlds

Preliminary Observations

286. We can never be too careful about the manner in which we question spirits, and especially about the nature of the questions themselves. We must consider two aspects of such questions: *form* and *scope*. As for form, they should be addressed clearly and precisely and should not be too complex. Another significant point, no less important, is the order in which they should be posed. For a subject that requires a series of questions, it is essential that they be methodically linked together, with each proceeding logically

from the one before it. In this way, spirits respond much more easily and clearly than if we were to ask at random, skipping from one subject to another without any transition. That is why it is a good idea to prepare questions beforehand, but during the session others may be inserted, according to the circumstances. Besides, such preparatory work will allow the questions to be drawn up more calmly, and will be a sort of anticipatory evocation (as we have stated), which the spirit might have watched and prepared itself to address. We will notice that very often the spirit responds to certain questions before they are even asked, which shows that it already knew about them beforehand.

The scope of the question requires even more serious attention because often the nature of the questioning is what elicits a correct or erroneous response. There are certain questions that spirits cannot or should not answer for reasons unknown to us, and it would therefore be futile to insist. However, the questions we should be most careful to avoid are those that test the spirit's perspicacity. It is often said that if something is obvious, spirits should know about it, but it is precisely those questions to which we already know the answers, or which we are able to clarify by ourselves, that they do not bother to answer. This distrust offends them and nothing satisfactory will result from it. Don't we often see examples of the same thing amongst ourselves? Do very knowledgeable individuals, who are aware of their own worth, like to respond to foolish questions aimed at testing them as if they were school children? The desire to make some person an adherent is no reason for spirits to have to satisfy idle curiosity. They know that sooner or later the person will be convinced, and the way this is done is not always the way we might suppose.

Consider a serious man, who is occupied with worthwhile and serious matters, constantly being bothered by a child's puerile questions, and you will be able to see what highly evolved spirits

think about all the foolishness asked of them. This of course does not mean that we cannot obtain worthwhile instruction and, especially, excellent advice from spirits, but that they respond better or worse according to their knowledge, their interest in us, the affection they feel toward us, and, finally, our purpose for inquiring of them and the usefulness with which they regard the subject. However, if we limit ourselves by thinking that they are more capable than others of informing us about questions concerning this world, they will not regard us with much sympathy. From then on they will visit us only hurriedly, and often, according to their degree of imperfection, they will be in a bad mood for having been needlessly inconvenienced.

287. Some people think that it is best not to ask questions at all, but rather to wait for a spirit's teaching without requesting it. This is a mistake, however. Spirits obviously provide spontaneous teachings of an elevated reach, and which we should not neglect, but there are explanations for which we would have to wait a long time if we did not solicit them directly. Without the questions we proposed, neither *The Spirits' Book* nor this present work would have ever been written, or would at least have been much less complete, and many very important problems would still not be resolved. Far from being inappropriate, questions are highly important for our learning when we formulate them within proper limits. They offer the further advantage of helping us unmask deceptive spirits, who, more pretentious than knowledgeable, rarely stand up under tightly logical examination, wherein the questions lead them to finally exposing themselves. Since truly high order spirits have nothing to fear about this process, they are the first to suggest that we ask for explanations concerning obscure points, whereas the others are afraid of confronting strong arguments and take great care to avoid them. That is why they usually suggest to the mediums whom they wish to dominate and

force to accept their utopian ideas to abstain from all controversy regarding their teachings.

Whoever has well understood what we have stated thus far in this work already has some idea of the scope to which we should limit the questions addressed to spirits. Nevertheless, in order to be more certain we will now provide their responses to the main subjects that individuals with little experience generally present to them.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Questions

288. 1) *Do spirits willingly respond to the questions asked of them?*

“It depends on the questions. Serious spirits take pleasure in responding to those whose purpose is goodness and your advancement. They do not listen to worthless questions, however.

2) *Is asking a serious question enough to receive a serious response?*

“No. It also depends on the spirit who responds.”

– *But won't a serious question keep frivolous spirits away?*

“It is not the question itself that keeps them away, but rather the character of the one who asks.”

3) *What kinds of questions are particularly disagreeable to good spirits?*

“All that are needless, asked out of curiosity or meant to test them. They do not respond to these and will withdraw.”

– *Are there questions that are disagreeable to imperfect spirits?*

“Only those that can make them display their ignorance or their ruse when they are trying to be deceptive. Otherwise, they will respond to anything without any concern for the truth.”

4) *What about persons who only regard spirit communications as a distraction or pastime, or as a way to obtain revelations about questions of a personal note?*

“Low order spirits like such persons very much, who, like themselves, love entertainment, and they are very pleased when they manage to deceive them.”

5) *When spirits do not respond to certain questions, is it because they do not want to or because a higher power opposes certain revelations?*

“It could be both. There are certain matters that cannot be revealed, and others that the spirit does not know about.”

– *If we strongly insist, will a spirit finally respond?*

“No. If a spirit does not want to respond, it can easily leave, and that is why it is proper to wait when they tell you to, and especially when they tell you not to insist on receiving a response. Insisting on a response that they do not want to give is a sure means of being deceived.”

6) *Are all spirits capable of understanding the questions asked of them?*

“Far from it. Less evolved spirits are incapable of understanding certain questions, which, however, does not prevent them from making a good or bad attempt – just like among yourselves.”

In certain cases, when it might be useful, a more enlightened spirit will often help a less knowledgeable one by whispering the response to it. This may be easily recognized by the contrast of certain responses with others, or by the spirit itself confirming it. However, this only applies to sincere unknowledgeable spirits and never to those who display false knowledge.

Questions concerning the Future

289. 7) *Can spirits unveil the future to us?*

“If humans knew the future, they would neglect the present, and yet this is an issue about which you always insist on obtaining a precise answer. This should be regarded as a serious error because

the manifestation of spirits is not a means of fortune-telling. If you absolutely insist on an answer, however, it will be given by a frivolous spirit – we are constantly warning you about this.” (See the *Spirits’ Book: Foreknowledge of the Future*, no. 868)

8) *Nevertheless, aren’t some future events spontaneously and correctly announced by spirits?*

“It might happen that the spirit foresees matters that it considers proper to disclose or that are its mission to reveal to you. It is in such cases, however, that we should be most concerned with deceptive spirits, who amuse themselves by making predictions. You can only judge the degree of confidence they merit by observing the circumstances as a whole.”

9) *What kinds of predictions should we distrust the most?*

“All which are not of *general* usefulness. Personal predictions can nearly always be considered apocryphal.”

10) *For what purpose do spirits spontaneously announce events that end up not occurring?*

“Most of the time to entertain themselves with the credulity, fright or elation they cause, and then they laugh at the disappointment. Sometimes, however, these deceptive predictions have a serious purpose: to test the persons to whom they are directed, revealing the nature of the good or evil sentiments they arouse when received.”

An example would be an announcement that could arouse greed or ambition at the prospect of an inheritance at someone’s death, etc.

11) *Why don’t serious spirits set a specific date when they sense a particular event will occur? Is it because they can’t or because they don’t want to?*

“For either reason. In certain cases they might *sense* the approach of an event, and then warn you about it. As for the exact time, they are often not allowed to give it, or many times

they cannot, because they themselves do not know it. A spirit may foresee an event, but the exact moment might depend on incidents that have not yet occurred, and which only God knows about. Frivolous spirits, who have no scruples about fooling you, set days and hours without caring about the truth. That is why every *circumstantial* prediction must be considered suspect.

“Once more, our mission is to enable you to evolve and we help you in any way we can. Those who ask high order spirits for wisdom will never be deceived. However, don’t think you can waste our time with your futilities and with foretelling the future for you. We have left that task to frivolous spirits, who amuse themselves with it like naughty children.

“Providence has set limits on what can be revealed to humans, and serious spirits keep quiet about anything they are forbidden to reveal. All who insist on receiving an answer expose themselves to the deceptions of low order spirits, who are always ready to take advantage of opportunities to exploit their gullibility.”

Spirits see or sense future events through induction. They see them occurring within a timeframe that they do not measure as we do. To set a specific time for an occurrence, they would have to identify with our way of calculating duration, which they do not always deem necessary. This is almost always the cause of apparent errors.

12) *Aren’t there individuals who have been gifted with the special ability to see the future?*

“Yes, those whose soul can disengage itself from matter, in which case it is their spirit who sees. When appropriate, God allows them to reveal certain things for good purposes; nonetheless, imposters and charlatans far outnumber them. This faculty will become more common in the future, however.”

13) *What about spirits who amuse themselves by telling people that they are going to die on a certain day at a specific time?*

“They are pranksters of bad taste – excessive bad taste – who only want to have fun at the alarm they create. You must never worry about this.”

14) *But why are certain persons warned by a presentiment about the time of their death?*

“Most of the time, during its moments of freedom the spirit itself knows about it and the person retains an intuition upon awakening. Since these persons have already been prepared, they are neither frightened nor disturbed by it. For them, this separation of the soul from the body is only a change of situation, or – if you prefer a rough example – it is like taking off heavy clothing and donning silk. The fear of death will decrease at the spread of Spiritist beliefs.”

Concerning Past and Future Lives

290. 15) *Can spirits reveal our past lives to us?*

“God sometimes allows them to be revealed, depending on the objective. If they will aid in your edification and instruction, these revelations will be authentic, and in such case, they almost always will occur spontaneously and completely unexpectedly. However, God never allows it to satisfy idle curiosity.”

– *Why do certain spirits never hesitate to make these revelations?*

“They are pranksters who amuse themselves at your expense. You should usually regard revelations of this nature as false, or at least suspect if they do not have an eminently serious and useful purpose. Mocking spirits have fun by flattering the vanity of persons by revealing pretentious antecedents. There are mediums and believers who take what such spirits say at face value in this regard, without even noticing that the current state of their spirit in no way would justify the position they believe they had occupied. It is pure vanity, and both mocking spirits and humans amuse themselves with it. It would be

more logical and in keeping with the progressive evolution of beings if such people had ascended instead of descended, which would be more honorable for them. In order to accept these revelations, it would be necessary for them to have occurred spontaneously through several mediums who did not know one another, besides the medium who received them in the first place. Then there would be reason enough for them to be believed.”

– *If we cannot know about our previous identity, does the same apply concerning the kind of life we lived, what social position we occupied, and the qualities and defects that predominated in us?*

“No, this may be revealed because it can serve for your evolution. However, you yourself may deduce your own past by studying your present.” (See *The Spirits’ Book: Forgetfulness of the Past*, no. 392)

16) *Can we receive any kind of revelation concerning our future lives?*

“No. Everything that any spirit might tell you regarding your future would be pure nonsense. You should realize that your future existence cannot be known beforehand, since it will be determined by you yourself according to your conduct while on earth and your resolutions as a spirit afterwards. The less you must expiate, the happier you will be, but knowing where and how that existence will be – once again, that is impossible. The only exception is in the rare and special case of spirits who are on earth only to fulfill an important mission, for then their course is somewhat traced out beforehand.

Concerning Moral and Material Interests

291. 17) *May we request advice from spirits?*

“Yes, of course. Good spirits never refuse to help those who trustingly evoke them, especially when addressing matters of the

soul. However, they ignore hypocrites – *those who pretend to be searching for the light while indulging in the darkness.*”

18) *Can spirits offer us advice about private affairs?*

“Sometimes, depending on the situation. It also depends on whom you ask. Advice about one’s private life is more precisely given by familiar spirits, who are more connected to individuals and take an interest in their concerns. Your familiar spirit is a friend, the confidant of your most secret thoughts, but frequently you weary it with questions that are so trivial that it stays away. On the other hand, it would be absurd to ask foreign spirits about intimate problems just like it would be to propose them to the first person you met on the street. You would do well not to forget that banal questions are incompatible with high order spirits. You must also consider the qualities of the familiar spirit, who may be either good or evil according to the sympathetic reasons connecting it to the person. The familiar spirit of an evil individual is an evil spirit, who may offer harmful advice, but it will withdraw and give way to a better spirit if the individual improves. Likes attract likes.”

19) *Can our familiar spirits reveal things that may help us in our material interests?*

“They could, and will sometimes do so, depending on the circumstances; however, bear in mind that good spirits never render service to greed. Evil spirits lure you with thousands of images to excite you, which then deceive you and end up disappointing you. Also, you should know that if your trial is to suffer this or that ordeal, protector spirits can help you bear it with more resignation and sometimes mitigate it, but in the interest of your own future they cannot free you from it. It is like a good father who does not give his son everything he wants.”

In many circumstances, our protector spirits can point out the best path for us to follow, but without leading us to it. Otherwise, we

would lose all initiative and wouldn't do anything without resorting to them, which would be harmful to our evolution. In order to progress, humans must continually acquire experiences at their own expense. That is why wise spirits counsel us but always hand us over to our own abilities like skillful teachers do with their students. In life's ordinary circumstances, they counsel us through inspiration, and thus leave us all the merit of our good works, as well as full responsibility for our bad choices.

It would be an abuse of our familiar spirits' patronage and a misunderstanding about their mission if we were to interrogate them all the time about the most trivial matters – as certain mediums do. Some mediums take up the pencil to get yes/no advice on the simplest decisions. This habit reveals both narrow-mindedness and the presumption of always having a servant spirit at their orders, who has nothing more to do than to concern itself with them and their petty interests. It furthermore does away with their own judgment and reduces them to playing a passive role without profit in the present and, undoubtedly, with certain harm to their future progress. If there is childishness in questioning spirits about futile matters, it is also infantile on the part of spirits to spontaneously concern themselves with what we may call our domestic routine. Such spirits may be good but they are certainly still very earthly.

20) If, upon dying, a certain man left his affairs in turmoil, could he ask his familiar spirit to help him disentangle them, and could he question it about the property he has left behind, which may not be fully known about, provided it is in the interest of justice?

“You forget that death is liberation from earthly concerns. Do you think that his spirit, happy with its freedom, will willingly concern itself any longer with the chain it has just freed itself from in order to satisfy the greed of heirs, who were perhaps happy that he died so that they might profit from his death? You speak

of justice, but justice is in disappointing the covetousness of the heirs, which is the beginning of the punishments that God has reserved for their greed for earthly assets. Moreover, the difficulties that are sometimes left at the death of a person comprise part of life's trials, and no spirit has the power to be free of them, for they belong to the decrees of God."

This response will surely disappoint those who imagine that spirits have nothing better to do than to act as our clairvoyant guides and help us not in the direction toward heaven but upon earth itself. Another consideration supports this response. If certain persons leave their affairs in disarray out of neglect during life, it is unlikely that they will be more careful with them after death, since they will feel happy to be free of the concerns that caused them. Moreover, even if they are little-evolved, they will attach less importance to them as spirits than as humans. As for the unknown assets they have left behind, there is no reason for them to be concerned about greedy heirs, who probably never even thought about them except in the hope of some profit. In addition, if they are still imbued with human passions, they might even feel a malicious pleasure in their heirs' disappointment.

If in the interest of justice and loved ones a spirit deems it useful to reveal such assets, it will do so spontaneously without the interested parties having to be mediums or resorting to one. It will make the matter known through unexpected circumstances, but never due to any requests made directly to it, because requests cannot change the nature of the trials that the parties must undergo. It would only aggravate them, because such requests almost always reveal greed and demonstrate to the spirit that its heirs only thought about it for selfish reasons. (See no. 295)

Concerning the Fate of Spirits

292. 21) *May we ask spirits for information about their situation in the spirit world?*

“Yes, and they willingly respond when the request is made out of affinity or the desire to be useful, rather than for the sake of curiosity.”

22) *Are spirits able to explain the nature of their sufferings or happiness?*

“Absolutely, and these revelations present you with a valuable lesson, for they enable you to understand the nature of future punishments and rewards. By destroying your erroneous ideas about the subject, they tend to rekindle your faith and trust in God’s goodness. Good spirits are happy to report on their bliss, whereas evil ones may be constrained to describe their sufferings in order to lead them to repent. They sometimes even find some relief in this. It is the unfortunate who groan in the hope of obtaining compassion.

“Don’t forget that the essential and exclusive goal of Spiritism is your improvement. To reach that goal the Spirits have received permission to initiate you into the future life, offering you examples that you may use to your advantage. The more you identify with the world that awaits you, the less you will suffer in the one where you now are. This encapsulates the present objective of Spiritist revelation.”

23) *By evoking persons about whose fate we are uncertain, may we know whether or not they are still alive?*

“Yes, if the uncertainty about their death is not a *necessity* or trial for those who are interested in knowing about it.”

– *If they have died, can they report the circumstances of their death in a way that can be verified?*

“If it is important, they can; otherwise, they won’t bother.”

Experience has shown in such cases that a spirit may not at all be impressed by our interest as to the circumstances of its death. If it wishes to reveal them, it will do so by itself by providing the most precise information, whether through a medium or through visions and

apparitions. Otherwise, a deceptive spirit can perfectly well take its place and amuse itself by providing worthless information.

The disappearance of individuals, whose deaths cannot be officially proven, often creates difficulties in family affairs. Only in rare and exceptional cases have we seen spirits provide worthwhile clues when questioned. If they wanted to, they no doubt could; however, they are almost always forbidden to when the difficulties comprise trials for those who would rather avoid them.

Thus, one would be mistaken to have fanciful hopes of obtaining an inheritance by this means, where the sole positive result is the money spent on such pursuit.

There is no lack of spirits who are prepared to encourage such hopes, and who have no scruples at all about leading interested parties on a futile search, from which they will be happy if they emerge feeling only a bit ridiculous.

Concerning Health

293. 24) *May spirits offer advice on health?*

“We need our health in order to fulfill our work while on earth, and that is why spirits willingly concern themselves with it. However, since there are both ignorant and knowledgeable ones – in this case as in all others – it is wise not to address the first one who appears.”

25) *If we address the matter to the spirit of a famous doctor would we be more certain of obtaining good advice?*

“Famous doctors are not infallible and often have theoretical ideas that are not always correct, and from which they are not suddenly freed by death. Earthly science is very insignificant in the light of heavenly science, and only highly evolved spirits possess

the latter. Even though they may use names you do not know, they may know much more about everything than your own scholars. It takes more than science to make spirits highly evolved, and you would be very surprised at the place certain scholars occupy among us. Hence, the spirit of a scholar may not know any more than it did while on earth if it has not progressed as a spirit.”

26) *As spirits, do scholars realize their scientific errors?*

“If they have reached a sufficiently high degree to let go of their vanity and to understand that their development is not yet complete, they realize them and confess them without being ashamed. If they are not sufficiently dematerialized, however, they may retain some of their earthly prejudices.”

27) *If doctors were to evoke their deceased clients, could they receive an explanation from them about the cause of their deaths, the mistakes they might have committed in treating them, and thereby increase their knowledge?*

“They could, and it would be very useful, especially if they were assisted by enlightened spirits, who could supplement the knowledge they lacked concerning certain illnesses. However, it would be necessary to do such studies in a serious and assiduous manner and with a humanitarian purpose – not as a means of acquiring knowledge and wealth without having to work for it.”

Concerning Inventions and Discoveries

294. 28) *Can spirits provide guidance in scientific research and discoveries?*

“Science is the work of genius and must only be acquired through work because that is the only way humans advance on their path. What would they merit if all they had to do was question spirits in order to know everything? Any imbecile could become learned at that price. The same applies to inventions and

industrial discoveries. Nevertheless, there is another consideration: each thing must come in its own time, and when minds are generally mature enough to receive it. If inventors were able to get answers directly from spirits, they would subvert the natural order of things and cause fruit to be borne before its proper time.

“God said to the man and woman, ‘You shall earn your bread with the sweat of your brow’, an admirable image that outlines the human condition in this world. Humans must progress in everything by working for it. If everything were given to them entirely finished, how would that serve their intelligence? It would be like a school child whose homework was done by someone else.”

29) *Are scientists and inventors never assisted by spirits in their research?*

“That’s a different matter altogether. When certain discoveries’ proper time has come, the spirits in charge of directing progress search for the appropriate persons to accomplish them, inspiring them with the necessary ideas but leaving them all the merit because they themselves will have to develop the ideas and carry them out. This is the process for all the great works of human intelligence. Good spirits respect all individuals in their own sphere: those who are capable only of tilling the soil will not be made depositories of the secrets of God, but spirits will know how to draw out of obscurity someone who is capable of fulfilling the divine plan. Do not allow yourselves through curiosity or ambition to be led onto a path that does not harmonize with the objective of Spiritism and which would result in the most ridiculous deceptions.”

A more precise understanding of Spiritism has calmed the fever for discoveries which, in its beginning, many individuals prided themselves for having made through it. There were people who have even asked spirits for recipes on how to dye and restore hair, to heal corns, etc. We have seen many who believed that they were about to make a fortune, but only reaped results that made them look ridiculous. The same thing

applies when someone wants to penetrate the mystery of the origin of things with the help of spirits. Certain spirits indeed have their own theories about it, but they are not any more valuable than those of humans and must be received with much caution.

Concerning Hidden Treasure

295. 30) *Can spirits reveal the whereabouts of hidden treasure?*

“High order spirits do not concern themselves with such things, but mocking spirits often reveal the whereabouts of non-existent treasures, or they might even indicate one place while the actual treasure is in another. Ironically, that has its usefulness in order to show that true fortune is in labor. If Providence destines hidden wealth to someone, that person will find it naturally and not by some other means.”

31) *What about the belief in spirits who guard hidden treasure?*

“Spirits who are not yet dematerialized attach themselves to things. Misers who have hid their treasure may still watch over it and guard it after death. Their perplexity at seeing it stolen is one of their punishments until they understand the futility of such things. However, there are also spirits on the earth in charge of guiding its geological transformations, and who have allegorically been transformed into guardians of natural treasures.”

The issue of hidden treasure is the same as that involving unknown inheritance. Someone would have to be insane to count on the feigned revelations that can come from the scoundrels of the invisible world. We have already stated that when spirits want to or are able to make such revelations, they do so spontaneously and do not require mediums. Here is an example:

A lady lost her husband after thirty years of marriage and was threatened with being expelled from her home without resources by her step-

sons, for whom she had been like a second mother. She was extremely desperate and one night her husband appeared to her and invited her to follow him into his office. There he showed her his writing desk, which was still sealed shut, and providing her with second sight, he showed her what was inside. He pointed out a secret drawer that she had not known about and explained how it worked, adding, "I foresaw what is happening and wanted to assure you of your inheritance. My will is in this drawer and I have left you the full use of this house and an income of..." Then, he disappeared. When the day arrived to remove the judicial seals, no one could open the drawer. The lady then told what had happened. She opened the drawer according to her husband's instructions and found that the will conformed to what he had said.

Concerning Other Worlds

296. 32) *How far can we trust spirits' descriptions of other worlds?*

"It depends on the *true* evolutionary degree of the spirits who provide them, for you must understand that ordinary spirits are as incapable of informing you about this matter as an unlearned person would be among you concerning the various countries of the earth. You often ask scientific questions about such worlds, which these spirits cannot answer. If they mean well, they address the issue according to their personal ideas. If they are frivolous, they have fun at providing you with bizarre and fantastic descriptions drawn from their own imagination and report on many matters that have nothing real about them. They are as imaginative in their discarnate state as they were on earth. Nonetheless, don't believe it is completely impossible to obtain information about other worlds. Good spirits love to describe the ones they inhabit in order to provide instruction to help you evolve and to place you on the path that will lead you to them. It is a way for them to

concentrate your ideas concerning the future and not to leave you in a vacuum.”

– *How can we be sure about the accuracy of these descriptions?*

“The best means is their agreement amongst themselves, but you must remember that they have your moral improvement as their goal. Thus, it is concerning the moral state of the inhabitants, about whom they can best inform you and not the physical or geological structure of those globes. With your current understanding you could not comprehend it anyway. Knowing about such structure would not help your progress in this world, and you will be fully capable of it when you are there some day.”

Questions about the physical composition and the astronomical conditions of worlds involve the field of scientific research, and spirits will not spare us any work on the subject. Otherwise, a particular astronomer would find it very convenient to ask spirits to make calculations for him, which afterwards he would undoubtedly not admit had happened. If through revelation spirits could spare someone some work on a particular discovery, they would probably do so for a scholar who was sufficiently modest to acknowledge the source openly and not for the benefit of those who are proud, who would deny spirits’ involvement and for whom, to the contrary, they often reserve the disappointments of self-centeredness.



Contradictions and Deceptions

Contradictions

297. The opponents of Spiritism do not hesitate to point out that its adherents do not agree amongst themselves, that not all even share the same beliefs; in other words, they contradict one another. If the teaching is given by spirits, they ask, why aren't they identical? Only a serious and in-depth study of the Science can expose these arguments for what they really are.

We will begin by stating that these contradictions, which certain individuals make such a big noise about, are usually more apparent than real, and that they refer more to the surface than to the depth of the issue, and that is why they are of no importance. These contradictions proceed from two sources: humans and spirits.

298. The contradictions of human origin have been sufficiently explained in the chapter *Theories*, no. 36. One should understand that in the beginning, while the observations were yet incomplete, different opinions arose about the causes and

consequences of spirit phenomena, and that three fourths of these opinions have fallen before a more serious and in-depth study. With few exceptions, and apart from certain individuals who have not easily broken from ideas they have either nourished or engendered, we can now state that there has been a unification of the vast majority of Spiritists, at least as to the general principles – except perhaps for a few insignificant details.

299. To understand the cause and worth of the contradictions of spirit origin, we must identify with the nature of the invisible world by having studied all its various aspects. At first glance, it may seem strange that spirits do not all think alike, but this will come as no surprise to anyone who knows about the infinite number of degrees that they must traverse before they reach the top of the scale. To expect a single view of matters we would have to suppose them to be all at the same level. To think that they all should see things correctly would be to believe that all had reached perfection, which has neither happened nor could happen when we remind ourselves that they are nothing more than humanity minus the corporeal envelope. Since spirits of all degrees can manifest, their communications bear the stamp of their ignorance or knowledge, their moral inferiority or superiority. It is precisely for distinguishing between the true and the false, the good and the evil, that our instructions up to this point have been provided.

We must remember that there are pseudo-scholar and semi-scholar, proud, presumptuous and theoretical spirits, just as among humans. Since only pure spirits know everything, for the rest – as for us – there are mysteries that they explain in their own way, according to their own ideas, and about which they can form correct or erroneous opinions. Out of vanity they want these opinions to prevail and they love to repeat them in their communications. The error lies in the attitude of some of their interpreters, who rashly espouse opinions that violate

common sense and regard themselves as solely responsible for divulging them. Thus, the contradictions of spirit origin arise from by the natural diversity of intelligence, knowledge, ability to judge and morality of certain spirits who are not yet capable of understanding and comprehending everything. (See *The Spirits' Book, Introduction*, sect. XIII, and *Conclusion*, sect. IX)

300. Some persons might ask what the use of good spirits' teachings is if they do not offer us a greater degree of certainty than those of humans. The response is simple. We do not accept the teachings of all humans with the same confidence, and between two doctrines we prefer the one whose author seems the more enlightened, capable, judicious and least subject to the passions. We must regard spirits in the same way. Even though some are not above humanity, there are many who have surpassed it, and they can provide us with information that we would seek for in vain amongst the most educated men and women. We must learn how to distinguish them from the crowd of low order spirits if we want to become enlightened, and it is this distinction that leads to an in-depth understanding of Spiritism. Even this information has its limits, however. If it has not been given to spirits to know everything, even less has it been given to humans; therefore, there are subjects about which we would ask spirits in vain, either because they must not inform us about them, or because they themselves do not understand them and can therefore only give us their own personal opinion. These personal opinions are what proud spirits state as absolute truths. It is especially regarding matters that must remain secret, such as the future and the beginning of things, which such spirits most insist on in order to give the impression that they know the secrets of God. This is also where we can find most contradictions. (See preceding chapter)

301. Following are the responses given by the Spirits to our questions concerning contradictions:

1) *Can the same spirit, communicating at two different Spiritist Centers, transmit contradictory opinions on the same subject?*

“If the two Centers differ as to ideas and opinions, the communication may be distorted, because they are under the influence of different ranks of spirits. In that case, it is not the communication itself that is contradictory, but the way in which it is transmitted.”

2) *We can understand that an answer may be altered, but when the character of the medium excludes any possibility of evil influence, how can high order spirits use diverse and contradictory language concerning the same subject and with individuals who are completely serious?*

“Truly high order spirits never contradict one another. Their language is always the same with *the same individuals*, but it may vary according to place and person. Therefore, note this well: contradiction is often only apparent; it is more related to words than to ideas; thus, upon reflection one can see that the fundamental idea is still the same. What is more, the same spirit may respond differently concerning the same question, depending on how highly evolved the evokers are. It is not always proper for all to receive the same response, because not all are equally advanced. It would be like a child and a scholar asking you the same question – you would obviously respond to each in a way that will enable each to understand and be satisfied with the answer. In this case, even though the answers are different in form, they would have the same essential meaning.”

3) *Why is it that when serious spirits are with certain individuals they seem to accept ideas and even prejudices that they warn against when they are with others?*

“We must make ourselves understood. If someone has a well-established conviction about some doctrine, even if erroneous, we must lead them away from it – but little by little. That is why we often employ *their own terms* and seem to go

along with their ideas, so that they do not suddenly take offense and stop learning from us.

“Moreover, it is not proper to sharply attack preconceptions, which would be a good way for us not to be listened to. This is why spirits often speak in terms of the opinions of those who listen to them: in order to gradually try to lead them to the truth. They adapt their language to these people as you would do if you were a skilful speaker. That is also why they will not speak to a Chinese person or a Muslim in the same way they would to a French person or a Christian – they would obviously be rejected.

“One should not see as a contradiction what it is usually only a developmental phase of truth. All spirits have their mission assigned by God, and they accomplish it according to the conditions they consider proper for benefiting those who receive their communications.”

4) Even apparent contradictions can cast doubt in the minds of certain persons. What method should we use in order to recognize the truth?

“In order to discern error from truth, one must delve into the understanding of our responses by carefully and seriously meditating on them. A true study must be made of them, which requires as much time as other studies do.

“Study, compare and meditate upon the issues. We have constantly affirmed that knowing the truth has its price. How could you expect to reach the truth by interpreting everything according to your own narrow-minded ideas, but which you consider so great? The day is not far off, however, when the Spirits’ teachings will be uniform not only in their details but also in their main aspects. Their mission is to destroy error, but this can only occur gradually.”

5) There are persons who have neither the time nor the ability required for a serious and in-depth study, and they accept whatever is

taught them without examining it. Wouldn't that put them at risk to believe in error?

“Practicing goodness and not evil is what is essential – there are not two separate doctrines for that. Goodness is always goodness, whether done in the name of Allah or Yahweh, because there is only one same God for the universe.”

6) How can spirits who seem to be intellectually evolved entertain obviously erroneous ideas about certain matters?

“They have their own doctrines. Those who are not very advanced, but who think they are, hold their ideas to be the truth. The same thing happens amongst you.”

7) What about doctrines that only accept communications from one spirit in particular such as God or Jesus?

“A spirit who teaches this wants to dominate, and therefore imposes itself as the only one. However, the unfortunate spirit who dares to assume the name of God will pay dearly for its pride. Such doctrines refute themselves, because they contradict the most widely verified facts. They are unworthy of serious consideration, because they lack foundation.

“Reason itself tells you that good proceeds from a good source, and evil from an evil source. Would you expect a good tree to produce bad fruit? Have you ever picked grapes from an apple tree? The diversity of the communications is obvious proof of the diversity of their origin. In fact, spirits who want to be the only ones to communicate fail to mention why others cannot do so. Their pretentiousness is the denial of what is most beautiful and consoling about Spiritism, i.e., the relations of the visible and invisible worlds, and of men and women with their loved ones, who would otherwise be lost to them forever. These very relations are what identify men and women with their future, and which detach them from the material world. Suppressing these relations would plunge them into the torment of doubt and would feed

their selfishness. If you were to examine the doctrine of these spirits, you would find unjustifiable contradictions at every step, proofs of their ignorance regarding the most obvious things, and thus sure signs that they are little-evolved.”

The Spirit Truth

8) Of all the notable contradictions in spirit communications, one of the most striking concerns reincarnation. If reincarnation is a necessity of spirit life, why don't all spirits teach it?

“Don't you realize that there are spirits whose ideas are as limited with regards to the present as are those of many individuals on the earth? They believe that their current situation must last forever; thus, they do not look beyond the circle of their immediate perceptions, nor do they worry about where they have come from, or where they are going; they are, nonetheless, subject to the law of necessity. Reincarnation is a necessity they do not think about while it is not happening to them at the moment. They know very well that the spirit progresses, but how? That is a conundrum for them. So, if you ask them about it, they will talk about the seven heavens superimposed on one another like the stories of a building. There are even some who will talk about ‘the sphere of fire’, the ‘sphere of stars’, the ‘sphere of flowers’ or the ‘sphere of the elect’.”

9) We understand that little-advanced spirits cannot comprehend this issue, but why then are there spirits who are obviously little-advanced both morally and intellectually, but who spontaneously talk about their various existences and their desire to reincarnate in order to expiate their past?

“Things happen in the spirit world which are difficult for you to understand. Don't you know individuals who are ignorant about certain matters but knowledgeable about others, who have more discernment than education, and others who have more wit

than discernment? Don't you also realize that certain spirits like to keep humans in ignorance, and to do so tout themselves as teachers, taking advantage of the ease with which their words are accepted? They seduce those who do not examine matters deeply, but when they are exposed to the light of reason, they do not keep up their charade for very long.

“Furthermore, you must take into account the overall prudence of the Spirits in the propagation of the truth. A light that is too strong and sudden is blinding, not enlightening. Thus, in certain cases they may deem it proper to spread the truth gradually, depending on the time, place and individuals. Moses did not teach everything that Christ would teach later, and Christ himself said many things that would only be understood by future generations. You speak of reincarnation and wonder why it has not been taught in certain countries. You must realize, however, that in a country dominated by color prejudices and with slavery deeply rooted in its customs, Spiritism would be rejected for the simple fact that it proclaims reincarnation. The idea that a master might become a slave – and vice versa – would appear outrageous. Wouldn't it be more worthwhile at first to accept the general idea, leaving its consequences for later? Oh, people! How short-sighted you are in appreciating the designs of God! Know, then, that nothing is done without God's permission and without a purpose that you often cannot fathom. I have already told you that Spiritist belief will become unified – you can be certain of it. The disharmonies are already less profound, and will be erased little by little as men and women become enlightened, and will disappear completely because it is God's will, against which no error can prevail.”

The Spirit Truth

10) *Don't the erroneous doctrines taught by certain spirits retard the progress of the true Science?*

“You want everything to be problem-free, but you must remember that there is no such thing as a field without weeds, which must be uprooted by the farmer. These erroneous doctrines are a result of the low order of your world. If humans were perfect, they would accept only the truth. Errors are like fake gemstones that only a trained eye can detect. Thus, you need training to distinguish the true from the false. Well then, erroneous doctrines have the purpose of enabling you to separate truth from error.”

– *Don't those who accept error hinder their own progress?*

“If they accept error, it is because they are not yet sufficiently advanced to comprehend the truth.”

302. *While awaiting unification, each one believes he or she possesses the sole truth, a delusion that deceptive spirits never cease to exploit. Upon what can impartial and disinterested individuals base their judgment?*

“The purest light cannot be obscured by any cloud. The flawless diamond is the most valuable. Therefore, judge spirits by the purity of their teachings. There will be unity where good has never mixed with evil. That is where humans will be connected by the very force of the circumstances, for they will realize that is where the truth is to be found. Notice that the fundamental principles are the same everywhere, and they must unite you in one common thought: the love of God and the practice of goodness. No matter what path of progress is intended for souls, the final objective is the same, as well as the means to reach it: practicing goodness; there are not two different ways of doing so. If crucial differences arise regarding the very foundation of the Doctrine, you have a sure rule for appraising them. That rule is this: the best doctrine is the one that best satisfies the heart and the reason, and has the most resources for leading men and women toward righteousness. I can assuredly tell you, that is the one which shall prevail.”

The Spirit Truth

The following causes can give rise to contradictions in spirit communications: the ignorance of certain spirits; the cunning of little-evolved spirits who out of malice or evil state the opposite of what was said by some other spirit, whose name they have usurped; the will of the spirit itself, who speaks according to time, place and persons, and who may deem it proper not to say everything to everybody; the insufficiency of human language for expressing the matter of the incorporeal world; the insufficiency of the means of communication, which do not always enable a spirit to express its entire thought; and finally, the interpretation that each individual may give to a word or explanation according to his or her own ideas, preconceptions or point of view regarding the subject. Only study, observation, experience and the absence of all vanity can teach us how to distinguish these various elements.

Deceptions

303. If being mistaken is unpleasant, it is even worse being deceived. Moreover, it is an inconvenience from which we can easily protect ourselves. The means for exposing the traps set by deceptive spirits have been set forth in previous instructions, and that is why we will say but little here regarding the matter. Following are what the Spirits have said about it:

1) *Deceptions are one of the most disagreeable stumbling blocks of practical Spiritism. Is there any way to avoid them?*

“It seems to me that you can find your answer by referring to what you have already learned. Yes, there is of course a very simple method, which is not to ask of Spiritism anything more than what it can and must give you – its goal is the moral perfection of humankind. As long as you hold to this, you will never be deceived, because there are not two different ways of understanding moral truth, but rather only that one which every man and woman of common sense can accept.

“The Spirits have come to teach you and guide you along the path of morality and not the path of fame and fortune, or to attend to your petty passions. If you never made needless requests of them, or those beyond their prerogatives, none of you would open yourselves up to deceptive spirits. Thus, we may conclude that the only one who is deceived is the one who deserves it.

“The Spirits are not charged with teaching you about the things of this world, but with guiding you securely in what will be useful to you in the other. When they address the issues of this world, it is because they deem it necessary, and not because you request it. If you see spirits as substitutes for fortune tellers and spell casters, then you will be deceived.

“If all humans had to do was to address spirits in order to know everything, they would lose their free will and be outside the designs traced out by God for humankind. Humans must act on their own. God does not send spirits to make straight the path of their material life, but to prepare them for the path of the future life.”

– However, there are persons who ask for nothing and are nonetheless terribly duped by spirits who manifest spontaneously without having been evoked.

“They ask for nothing, but they accept what such spirits say – which amounts to the same thing. If they would distrust anything outside the essential objective of Spiritism, frivolous spirits would not deceive them so easily.”

2) Why does God allow sincere individuals who trustingly accept Spiritism to be deceived? Couldn't this lead to them giving up their belief?

“If they gave up their belief for that reason, it would be because their faith was not very solid in the first place. Persons who would abandon Spiritism because of a simple deception would show that they had not understood it, and that they had missed its main point. God allows deception in order to test the perseverance

of true adherents and to punish those who use Spiritism simply as a means of entertainment.”

The Spirit *Truth*

The cunningness of deceptive spirits sometimes surpasses anything we could possibly imagine. The artfulness with which they erect their weaponry and plot ways of being persuasive would deserve attention even if they were limited to innocent pranks. However, deceptions can lead to unpleasant consequences for those who are not prepared. We are very fortunate for having been able *in time* to open the eyes of many persons who have asked us for advice, saving them from difficult and compromising situations. Among the methods used by these spirits we should put in first place as being the most frequent those that excite greed, such as the revelation of vast buried treasures, the announcement of inheritances and other sources of wealth. We must also regard as suspect predictions with set dates and all precise indications regarding material interests. We should take all care with arrangements prescribed or advised by spirits when the purpose is not clearly reasonable. We must never allow ourselves to be dazzled by the names assumed by spirits to give validity to their words. We must distrust audacious theories and systems, and, finally, we should distrust everything outside the moral objective of manifestations. We could write an entire volume about the most curious stories involving all the deceptions that have come to our attention.



Charlatanism and Trickery

• Mediums for Hire • Fraudulent Manifestations

Mediums for Hire

304. Since anything can be exploited, it is no wonder that there are persons who want to exploit spirits. It remains to know how spirits would take it if such an attempt were made on them. We may state from the start that nothing lends itself better to charlatanism and trickery than such an occupation. Since there are many more fake mediums than somnambulists, this simple fact in itself is a basis for distrust. On the other hand, unprofitableness is the best response to those who only see the phenomena as clever tricks – there is no such thing as non-profit charlatanism. What reason would persons have for practicing deceit without profit, especially if their recognized trustworthiness places them above suspicion?

If mediums' use of their faculty for monetary gain raises suspicions about mediums in general, it does not prove that such suspicions have any foundation. They may truly have the faculty and still act in good faith, although expecting to get paid. In that case, let us see if it is possible to expect a satisfactory result.

305. If someone has really understood what we have stated about the conditions required to serve as interpreters for good spirits, the multiple causes that can repel them, the circumstances which, apart from the spirits' will, might be obstacles to their manifestation, and, finally, all the conditions of a *moral* nature that can influence communications, how could he or she believe that a spirit, even if it is of the lowest order, would at all times be under the orders of paid mediums and be subject to their demands to answer to the curiosity of the first inquisitor who came along? If we understand the aversion good spirits hold for anything that has the smell of avarice and selfishness about it, and the little importance they attach to material matters, how could we possibly believe that they would help those who intend to make a business of their manifestations? The idea is repugnant to reason, and one would have to know next to nothing about the nature of the spirit world to accept such a thing. However, since frivolous spirits are less scrupulous and look for occasions to amuse themselves at our expense, it might be that if we are not fooled by a fake medium, it is still quite possible to be fooled by some of these spirits. These simple considerations provide us with a measure of confidence to be given to these types of communication, but why resort to paid mediums nowadays if the faculty may be found among family members, friends and acquaintances at no cost, if we ourselves do not possess it?

306. Mediums for hire are not only those who ask for payment. Such self-interest does not always appear as ambition for material profit, but also as a pretence of any kind that may support personal desires. This is one of the weaknesses that mocking spirits know very well how to exploit, skillfully and astutely taking advantage of it and lulling those who fall under their influence into deceptive illusion. In sum: mediumship is granted for practicing the good, and the good spirits withdraw from anyone who intends

to transform it into a means for reaching anything contrary to the designs of Providence. Selfishness is the scourge of society, and good spirits strive against it constantly; therefore, one should never suppose that spirits would ever want to aid it. This is so reasonable that it would be needless to insist on the matter.

307. Physical effects mediums belong to another category. Such effects are usually produced by low order spirits with fewer scruples. This does not imply that these spirits are necessarily evil, however – a person may be simply a porter but yet be very honest. Mediums of this type, who desired to exploit their faculty, could easily find a spirit to assist them without much hesitation. However, even in this case there is a problem. Physical effects mediums, like those who provide intellectual communications, have received their ability for good purposes and not for their own personal satisfaction. If they abuse it, they could lose it or be harmed by it because, in reality, less evolved spirits are under the orders of highly evolved ones.

Little-evolved spirits love to deceive but they themselves do not like to be deceived. Even though they may spontaneously share in the games and caprices of curiosity because they enjoy amusing themselves, they dislike being exploited or serving as accomplices in money making. Moreover, they are always proving they have their own will, and that they act however and whenever it seems best to them, which renders physical effects mediums even less certain of the regularity of manifestations than writing mediums. Intending to produce them on certain days and at certain times would show profound ignorance. So what can they do to ensure money? Fraudulently simulate the phenomena. That is what some may resort to, not only those who accept such an occupation, but also even apparently simple individuals who think it is a much easier way to make a living than having to work for it. If an actual spirit doesn't produce anything, they make up for it in other ways –

the imagination is very fertile when it comes to making money! Since required payment is a legitimate motive for suspicion, that in itself is justification for strict examination, which should offend no one without justifying such suspicion. However, this suspicion is as legitimate in cases of payment as it is offensive in relation to honorable and disinterested individuals.

308. Even when restricted to physical manifestations, mediumship has not been granted for putting on shows. Those who think that spirits are under their orders for public exhibition may rightly be suspected of charlatanism or skillful sleight-of-hand. Let us always remember this when we see adds for *Spiritist* or *spiritualist* séances with paid admission, and remember what we will get when attending these shows.

From everything we have said, we may conclude that absolute disinterestedness in profit is the best guarantee against charlatanism, for if it does not always ensure the veracity of intelligent communications, it at least deprives evil spirits of a powerful means of action and shuts the mouths of certain detractors.

309. We will now briefly address amateur trickery, i.e. the innocent fraud of certain pranksters. This deception may be practiced as entertainment at unimportant and frivolous meetings, but never in serious gatherings that only admit honest persons. Someone may derive pleasure from momentary trickery, but he or she would have to be strangely patient to keep up such a role for months and years, and each time for long hours in a row. Only some kind of profit could lead someone to persevere for so long, and profit, we will repeat, should immediately arouse suspicion.

310. One might argue that mediums cannot donate all their time to the public in the interest of Spiritism, because they too need to make a living. However, is it in the interest of Spiritism or in *their own* interest that they donate their time? And

mightn't they anticipate it, before anything, as a possible lucrative occupation? Dedicated people can always be found at a price. Do they have only this occupation at their disposal? We mustn't forget that whether they are of a high order or a low order, spirits are the souls of the dead. If morality and religion obligate us to respect their physical remains, then there is an even greater obligation to respect their spirits.

What would we say about someone who dug up a corpse in order to display it for money because it was capable of arousing curiosity? Would it be any less disrespectful to display the spirit than the body under the pretext of being curious to see how the spirit acts? And we should note that the price for a seat will reflect the scope of the tricks and the attractiveness of the show. Even if during its lifetime a spirit had been a comedian, it would certainly not suspect that after death it would encounter an entrepreneur who would make it perform for free while he or she made a profit from it.

We must remember that both physical and intelligent manifestations are only permitted by God for our instruction.

311. In spite of these moral considerations, we of course cannot deny the possibility that there are paid mediums who are honest and conscientious, since there are honest individuals in all occupations. We are only addressing abuse. Nonetheless, we must agree that, for the reasons we have given, there is more likelihood for abuse among paid mediums than among those who consider their faculty as a gift and use it only to serve others.

Besides the circumstances, the degree of trust or distrust that we concede to paid mediums depends more than anything else on their character and morality. Mediums who have a serious and eminently useful purpose, but who are prevented from using their time in another activity, are for this reason *exempt* from other obligations and cannot be confused with *speculating* mediums, who have pre-meditatively made mediumship a business. Therefore, according to

the *motive* and the *purpose*, spirits may condemn, absolve or even favor them. They judge the intent more than the material fact.

312. The same considerations do not apply to somnambulists who utilize their faculty for profit. Although this exploitation is also subject to abuse, and unprofitableness comprises the greatest guarantee of sincerity, their situation is different because it is their own spirit who acts and, consequently, is always at their disposal. Actually, they only willfully exploit themselves because they are free to use their own faculties as they please, whereas speculative mediums exploit the souls of the dead. (See no. 172, *Somnambulist Mediums*)

313. We are quite aware that our severity regarding mediums for hire sets us against all who exploit or intend to exploit this new business, making them, as well as their friends who follow their opinion, our staunch enemies. We may console ourselves by recalling that the money-changers who were expelled from the temple by Jesus could hardly have looked upon him with much favor. We are also faced with individuals who do not regard the matter with proper seriousness. Nevertheless, we feel we have the right to have and express our opinion. We would not try to force it on anybody. If the majority have adopted it, however, it is because they have apparently found it to be appropriate. At any rate, we do not see how anyone could prove that there is less possibility for fraud and abuse in speculation than in unprofitableness. On our part, if our writings have contributed to casting doubt on mediumship for hire in France and other countries, we believe that it will not be one of the least services they have rendered to *serious* Spiritism.

Fraudulent Manifestations

314. Those who do not accept the reality of the physical manifestations usually attribute them to fraud or special effects.

They start with the principle that skillful illusionists can do things that seem miraculous to those who do not know their tricks. Hence, they conclude that mediums are mere schemers. We have already refuted this argument or opinion, particularly in our articles about Mr. Home and in the January and February 1858 issues of *Revue Esprit*. We will therefore only say a few words on the matter before addressing a more serious topic.

There is one consideration that will not escape anyone who reflects on the matter a little. There are undoubtedly illusionists of amazing skill, but they are rare. If all mediums practice sleight-of-hand, we would have to agree that this art has made enormous progress in a short amount of time and has suddenly become very well known, since it may be found to be an innate ability among persons who have never suspected it – even children.

Does the fact that there are charlatans who sell their snake oil in public and even doctors who privately abuse their clients' trust mean that all doctors are charlatans or that the medical class has lost its respectability? Does the fact that there are persons who sell colored water as wine mean that all who sell wine are adulterators, and that there is no such thing as pure wine? Anything can be abused – even the most respectable – and we may state that there is also genius in fraud. However, fraud always has some purpose, some material interest. When nothing can be gained from it, there is no interest in it. That is why we have stated that, regarding paid mediums, the best of all guarantees is absolute unprofitableness.

315. Of all the spirit phenomena, those that are most susceptible to fraud are the ones involving physical effects, for reasons we must now consider. First, they are directed more toward sight than intelligence and are therefore most easily imitated by sleight-of-hand. Second, they arouse more curiosity than the others, are more appropriate for attracting crowds, and, consequently, they are more fruitful. From this double point of

view, it is easy to see why charlatans are so interested in imitating these manifestations. Since most spectators are unfamiliar with science, they are generally more interested in entertainment than serious instruction, and we know that entertainment always pays better than instruction. There is a more decisive reason to consider, however. Sleight-of-hand can imitate physical effects and only requires dexterity, but so far it has not been gifted with improvisation, which requires an uncommon dose of intelligence, and it cannot therefore produce those beautiful and sublime sayings that spirits normally provide during their communications, and which are frequently so apropos. This reminds us of the following occurrence.

A literary gentleman came to see us one day and said that he was a qualified *intuitive* writing medium, and that he was available to the Spiritist Society. Since it was the Society's policy not to accept mediums whose abilities we were unsure of, we asked the visitor first to come to a private meeting to provide us with evidence of his faculty. He actually came to the meeting, where several mediums were either writing spirit dissertations or responding with remarkable precision to questions asked of them or about issues on unknown topics. When the visitor's turn came, he wrote some meaningless words, said that he was not feeling well that day, and we never saw him again. He undoubtedly found that the role of an intelligent effects medium was more difficult to enact than he had thought.

316. In all matters, the persons who are easiest to deceive are the ones who do not belong to the trade, and the same applies to Spiritism. Those who are unfamiliar with it are easily fooled by appearances, whereas a preliminary and careful study, not only of the causes of the phenomena but also the normal conditions in which they may be produced, would initiate them into the subject and furnish them the means of recognizing fraud.

317. Fraudulent mediums are justifiably stigmatized in the following letter, which we have reproduced from the August, 1861 issue of *Revue Spirite*.

Paris, July 21, 1861

Dear Sir:

One may disagree on certain points and thoroughly agree on others. I have just finished reading some considerations on page 213 of the last issue of your magazine concerning fraud involving issues of spiritual (or Spiritist) experiments, considerations to which I am happy to have fully dedicated myself. Consequently, all confusion about theoretical and doctrinal matters has disappeared as if by magic.

I am perhaps not as severe as you are with regard to mediums who worthily and properly accept remuneration to make up for time dedicated to experiments, which are often long and tiring. However, I am as severe as you – and it is impossible not to be – with regard to those who resort to deception and fraud to compensate for when the promised and hoped-for results are absent or insufficient. (See no. 311)

Mixing truth and error when dealing with phenomena precipitated by the intervention of spirits is simply disgraceful, and a medium would have absolutely no moral sense in thinking that he or she could do so without scruples. As you have observed perfectly, *it casts doubt over the matter in the minds of the indecisive* once fraud is recognized. I would add that it most deplorably compromises honorable individuals who lend the disinterested support of their knowledge and understanding to such mediums, and who have become trusting patrons by sponsoring them in some way. Such an act is committing a true abuse of authority.

All mediums who have been caught in the act of fraud – or if I may use a slightly trivial expression “with their hand in the cookie jar” – deserve to be stigmatized by all spiritualists

or Spiritists everywhere. It is their strict duty to unmask and expose them.

If you think it proper to print these few lines in your magazine, they are at your disposal.

Sincerely,

Matthew

318. All spirit phenomena are not equally easy to imitate. There are some that obviously defy every skill of illusion – particularly those involving the movement of objects without contact, the suspension of heavy objects in the air, raps heard in several places at once, apparitions, etc. – except by trickery and collusion. That is why we have stated that, in such a case, one must attentively observe the circumstances, and, especially, take into account the character and situation of the persons involved, as well as their objective and interest in being deceptive. This is the best of all controls because there are circumstances that remove all reason for suspicion. Therefore, we think one should at first distrust whoever makes a spectacle or object of curiosity and amusement of these phenomena, or whoever claims to produce them at will and at the appointed time – as we have already explained. We can never repeat too often that the concealed intelligences who manifest can be offended, and want to show us they also have free will and are not subject to our whims. (See no. 38)

It is enough for us to point out a few subterfuges employed, or which may be employed in certain cases for good faith observers to guard against. It would be a waste of time to try and dissuade those who insist on passing judgment without having delved into the matter.

319. A common phenomenon is that of raps produced within the wood, and which may or may not be accompanied by movements of the table or other objects being used. It is one of the easiest effects to imitate either with foot contact or by

causing the furniture to produce small crackling noises within it. However, there is a special little maneuver that one should be forewarned about. The hands can be placed close together flat on the table so that the thumbnails forcefully support each other. Then, by an entirely imperceptible muscular movement a dry noise can be produced that is quite similar to inner typology. The noise reverberates within the wood, producing a complete illusion. Nothing is easier to simulate – as many raps as required, a drumbeat, etc. – than responding to certain questions with a yes or no, with numbers or even letters of the alphabet.

Once forewarned, however, it is very easy to recognize the fraud, which is not possible if the hands are far apart from each other, and if we are sure that no other contact can produce the noise. Moreover, true raps display the characteristic of changing places and tone at will, which cannot occur when produced by the cause we have indicated or any other similar one. Thus, they may jump from the table to some other piece of furniture not touched by anyone, the walls, the ceiling, etc., and also respond to unforeseen questions. (See no. 41)

320. Direct writing is even easier to imitate. Without mentioning well-known chemical agents that make writing appear at a given time on a white sheet of paper (which can be foiled with ordinary precautions), this ruse can also occur through a skillful sleight-of-hand, wherein one sheet is replaced by another. Furthermore, the defrauder may distract one's attention while quickly writing a few words. Some have even been known to write with a small pencil lead hidden in the fingernail.

321. Apportations also lend themselves to sleight-of-hand. One can easily be deceived by a more or less dexterous – even unprofessional – magician. In no. 96 above, we stated that spirits themselves determine the exceptional conditions under which these

appearances can occur so that we may conclude that any *willful* and *easy* obtainment should at least be considered suspicious. The same applies to direct writing.

322. In the chapter on *Special Mediums* we mentioned what the Spirits regard as both common and rare mediumistic aptitudes. One may properly distrust mediums who intend to easily precipitate either apparitions or direct writing, or who aspire to display multiple abilities – claims that are rarely justifiable.

323. Depending on the circumstances, intelligent manifestations offer the greatest guarantee against fraud, but even these are open to being imitated, at least regarding banal and commonplace communications. Some think that there is greater safety concerning mechanical mediums, not only with regard to the independence of ideas but also against deception. This is why certain persons prefer physical intermediaries. Nevertheless, this is a mistake, for fraud slips in everywhere. We know that with enough dexterity even a writing basket or planchette can be directed at will, giving it all the appearances of spontaneity. What removes all doubts are the thoughts expressed by the medium, whether he or she is a mechanical, intuitive, auditory, speaking, or seeing medium. There are communications of this type that are so far beyond the ideas, knowledge and even the intellectual reach of the medium that it would be necessary to be oddly mistaken to attribute them to the medium. We realize that charlatanism can be very skillful and resourceful, but we have never known it to have the gift of transmitting knowledge to the ignorant, or intelligence to someone who does not have it.

To sum up, we repeat that the best guarantee is in the recognized morality of the mediums and the absence of all causes of material interest or vanity that could stimulate them to exercise their mediumistic faculties because these same causes can lead them to simulate those that they do not actually possess.

CHAPTER XXIX



Meetings and Societies

• Meetings in General • Bona Fide Societies •
Subjects for Study • Rivalries among Societies

Meetings in General

324. Spiritist meetings can offer big advantages because they foster enlightenment through the exchange of ideas and through questions and observations raised by anyone, and from which everyone may benefit. It would be erroneous to treat such meetings as ordinary gatherings, however, for desirable results require special conditions, which we will now examine. Meetings comprise true collective wholes. Therefore, the instructions given up to this point regarding single individuals also apply to groups, which means that groups should take the same precautions and guard against the same problems that apply to individuals. That is why we have left this chapter until last.

Spiritist meetings vary widely as to their characteristics and according to their goals; thus, their intrinsic conditions will also vary. According to their nature, they may be *frivolous*, *experimental* or *instructive*.

325. *Frivolous meetings* are composed of individuals who are only interested in the entertainment aspect of manifestations. These persons are amused by the joking remarks made by the frivolous spirits who attend such gatherings because they can enjoy free rein. It is during these meetings that the most banal things are normally asked of the spirits: predictions concerning the future, tests of their astuteness in guessing persons' ages, objects certain individuals have in their pockets, revelations of little secrets, and a thousand other things of such importance.

These meetings are of no consequence, but since frivolous spirits are sometimes quite intelligent and are generally good-humored and merry, interesting things sometimes occur, of which the observer may take advantage. However, persons who attended only these sessions and judged the spirit world according to such samples would get an erroneous idea about it, like someone who judged an entire population of a large city by a few of its neighborhoods. Simple common sense tells us that highly evolved spirits would never participate in meetings of this kind, where the participants are not any more serious than the manifesting entities. Those who want to concern themselves with meaningless matters will naturally evoke frivolous spirits, just as in a social gathering they might call in comedians for entertainment. However, it would be sacrilege to invite venerable names, mixing the sacred with the profane.

326. *Experimental meetings* are most concerned with the production of physical manifestations, but for many they represent a show that is more curious than instructive. Disbelievers leave them feeling more perplexed than convinced when they have not seen anything else, and they devote themselves to looking for possible artifices, because not understanding what they have seen, they naturally suppose that trickery was involved. Exactly the opposite happens with those who have studied the matter

beforehand, however. They understand the possibility of the occurrences and the physical phenomena help to consolidate their convictions. On the other hand, if trickery is involved, they will know how to discover it.

Despite the danger of fraud, these types of expectations have had a usefulness that no one would deny, because they are what led in the first place to the discovery of the laws that govern the invisible world, and for many they are still a powerful means of conviction. Nevertheless, we maintain that they are not sufficient for initiating anyone into Spiritist Science any more than simply seeing an ingenious mechanism would provide any knowledge about mechanics for someone who is not familiar with its laws. However, if such experiments were methodically and prudently performed, much better results would be obtained. We shall address this subject shortly.

327. *Instructive meetings* are entirely different in character, and since they are the only ones where we can obtain real teaching, we shall particularly insist on the conditions under which they should be held.

The first condition is that seriousness must be maintained in every meaning of the word. All present must be convinced that the spirits whom they want to address belong to a very special order, that the sublime cannot be mixed with the banal, nor good mixed with evil, and that if they wish to obtain good results, they must address good spirits. However, it is not enough to merely evoke good spirits; a strict condition is that the participants must be surrounded by a favorable atmosphere, so that good spirits *want to come*; in other words, high order spirits do not participate in meetings of frivolous and superficial persons – just as they would not if they were incarnate.

A gathering is not truly serious if it is not concerned with worthwhile subjects to the exclusion of all others. If it is meant

for obtaining extraordinary phenomena out of curiosity or as a pastime, the spirits who produce them may participate, but the more highly evolved ones will stay away. In other words, the character of the meeting will always determine the spirits who are disposed to attend it. A serious meeting would miss its goal if it replaced instruction with entertainment. Physical manifestations have their usefulness, as we have stated, and those who want to observe them should participate in experimental meetings, whereas those who desire to gain understanding should attend instructional meetings. Thus, both types of participants can complete their Spiritist instruction, just as in the study of medicine some take coursework while others do internships.

328. Spiritist instruction does not entail only the moral teachings given by spirits, but also the study of facts. It involves the theory of the phenomena and research into their causes, and as a consequence, the evidence for what is possible and impossible; in other words, the observation of everything that may enable the science to develop. It would be erroneous to believe that such facts are limited to the extraordinary phenomena, or that those which principally touch the senses are the only ones worthy of attention. At every step of the way we encounter important facts during intelligent communications, which persons gathered together for study should not neglect. These facts, which would be impossible to enumerate, arise from numerous fortuitous circumstances. Although less prominent, they are of no less interest for observers who find in them the confirmation of a known principle or the revelation of a new one, which in turn leads them to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of the invisible world; this is also a form of philosophy.

329. Study meetings are furthermore quite useful for intelligent manifestation mediums, especially for those who

seriously want to perfect themselves, but to do so they must not participate with the foolish presumption that they are infallible. As we have already stated, one of the biggest problems of practical mediumship is obsession and fascination. Thus, these mediums can be deluded (in good faith) as to the merit of the communications they obtain. We have come to understand that deceptive spirits find an open door when they deal with individuals who are ignorant on this subject, which is why such spirits endeavor to keep their mediums away from all supervision, and when necessary, constrain them to have an aversion for whomever might be able to enlighten them. Thanks to isolation and fascination, they can easily lead such mediums to accept everything they want them to.

We will never tire of saying: there is not only a pitfall in this but also a danger – yes, a true danger. The only way to escape it is for such mediums to submit to the supervision of disinterested and benevolent individuals, who coolly and impartially judge the communications, and who can thus open their eyes and lead them to see what they cannot see by themselves. All mediums who fear this judgment already find themselves on the path of obsession. Those who believe the light has been given only to them are already completely subjugated. If they take the observations badly, if they are irritated by them and reject them, there can be no doubt as to the evil nature of the spirits who assist them.

We have already said that mediums may lack the knowledge needed to notice errors, and that this can allow them to be trustingly deceived by pretty words and pretentious language, and to be seduced by sophisms – all in good faith. This is why that if they do not have sufficient knowledge themselves, they should modestly resort to others who do, according to the popular quotes, “four eyes are better than two” and “none are a good judge of their own cause.” It is from this point of view that meetings are of great usefulness to mediums if they are sensible enough to listen to

advice, since at such meetings they can find persons who are more enlightened, more capable of perceiving the often very delicate nuances by which spirits reveal how little advanced they are.

All mediums who sincerely do not want to become instruments of lies should take to serious meetings the communications they have obtained in private, and should accept and even ask for a critical examination of them. If they have been exposed to deceptive spirits, this is the surest way of breaking free of them and showing that they cannot be deceived by them. Moreover, mediums who are bothered by criticism really have no reason to be, since their personal vanity is not involved in the matter. What they write is not a product of themselves, and they therefore have no more responsibility for bad communications than if they were to read the verses of a bad poet.

We are insistent on this point because if it is a pitfall for mediums it is also a pitfall for meetings, where one should not lightly trust all who interpret spirits. The participation of obsessed or fascinated mediums in meetings would be more harmful than beneficial – they should not even be admitted. We believe that we have already discussed the matter enough to show how participants at meetings can avoid being deceived as to the characteristics of obsession even if the mediums are not capable of recognizing it by themselves. One of the most obvious is undoubtedly their pretension of being the only ones who are right while all others are not. Obsessed mediums who do not want to recognize their situation are like diseased persons who delude themselves about their health, and who die because they did not submit to the necessary treatment.

330. One objective of a serious meeting should be to keep it free of deceiving spirits, but it would be erroneous to consider it free of them simply because of its purpose and the quality of its mediums. It will only achieve this objective when the proper conditions are created.

In order to fully understand what the proper conditions entail, we will refer the reader to what we stated above in no. 231 concerning the *influence of the surroundings*. We should regard all individuals as being surrounded by a certain number of invisible companions, who identify with their character, tastes and inclinations. Thus, all who attend a meeting bring along spirits who are sympathetic with them. According to their number and nature, these companions can exert either a good or a bad influence on the meeting itself and the communications. A perfect meeting would be one in which all the members are animated by the same love for the good and only bring good spirits with them; however, the next best would be one in which good spirits outnumber evil ones. This, of course, is so logical that we do not have to insist upon it.

331. A meeting is a collective being, whose qualities and properties are the sum of all its members, forming a sort of cluster, and this cluster will be stronger the more homogenous it is. If one fully understands what was stated in no. 282, quest. 5, concerning the manner in which spirits are informed when we call to them, it will be easy to understand the associative power of the participants' thoughts. If a spirit is in any way struck by thought – as we are by a voice – then twenty individuals united with the same intent will obviously have more power than only one. However, in order for all thoughts to contribute toward the same goal, they must vibrate in unison and blend themselves into a single thought, something that cannot occur without concentration.

Furthermore, when a spirit comes into an environment which is completely sympathetic, it feels more at ease. When it finds itself only among friends, it willingly attends and is more willing to respond. Whoever has followed intelligent spirit manifestations to some degree is certainly convinced of this truth. If thoughts are divergent, however, they cause a collision of disagreeable ideas for

the spirit, and thus harm the manifestation. The same happens with individuals when they have to speak in a meeting. If they feel that everyone's thoughts are sympathetic and favorable, that impression acts upon their ideas and gives them greater energy. The unanimity of this influence exerts a kind of magnetic action upon them that doubles their effectiveness, whereas indifference or hostility upsets and paralyzes them. That is why actors feel electrified by applause, and since spirits are much more impressionable than humans, the environment has much more influence upon them.

Every Spiritist meeting should try to be as homogenous as possible. Of course, we are referring to meetings that desire to obtain serious and truly useful results. However, if they simply want to obtain any communications whatsoever regardless of quality, all these precautions are obviously unnecessary, but then they should not decry the quality of the product.

332. Since concentration and communion of thought are required conditions for every serious meeting, we can understand that a very large number of participants is one of the causes most contrary to homogeneity. There is no set limit to this number, of course. We know that one hundred persons, who are sufficiently concentrated and attentive, provide better conditions than ten, who are distracted and unruly. However, it is also obvious that the greater the number, the less easily such conditions are met. It is moreover a fact proven by experience that small intimate circles are always more favorable to beautiful communications for reasons we have already given.

333. Another requirement that is no less necessary is that the sessions be regular. At every meeting we can always find spirits who we might call *customary frequenters*, but we do not mean spirits who are everywhere and meddle in everything. Instead, we are referring to protector spirits, or those who are most frequently

evoked. Do not think these spirits have nothing better to do than listen to us, however. They have their own duties and are sometimes in no position to be evoked at the moment. When meetings are held on set days and at fixed hours, they make themselves available at such times and rarely fail to appear. Some even take punctuality to an extreme. They might be offended at only a fifteen minute delay, and if they were the ones who set up the meeting in the first place, it will be useless to evoke them before the appointed time. Nevertheless, we would emphasize that although spirits prefer regularity, the truly high order ones are not so meticulous. The demand for strict punctuality is a sign of being lower within the hierarchy, as is anything else that is puerile. Spirits may even appear outside set times and, in fact, will appear willingly if the subject matter is important. Nothing is more harmful to the reception of worthwhile communications, however, than evoking them at random, on a simple whim or without a serious reason. Since they are not subject to our whims, they would not answer us, and it is especially on such occasions that others can take their place and name.

Bona Fide Societies

334. Everything we have stated about meetings in general naturally applies to regularly constituted societies. Nevertheless, societies must struggle against a few special problems deriving from ties among their members. From the numerous requests we have received for information about their composition, we will sum up some of our explanations.

Spiritism, which has only recently appeared on the scene, is diversely appreciated and too little understood in its essence by a large number of its followers in order to offer a strong bond amongst its members that could give rise to an

association. Such bond could not exist except among those who understand its moral objective, and who completely *apply themselves* to it. No serious element of connection could exist among those who only see it through the more or less curious phenomena. If such phenomena were placed above principles, one simple disagreement on the right way to regard them could cause a schism. The same would not apply to those solely interested in its moral objective, however, because there are no two ways of seeing it. It is also a fact that wherever one finds such individuals, mutual trust always connects them with one another. Reciprocal benevolence is the rule among them, and excludes any embarrassment resulting from sensitiveness, pride triggered by the slightest contradiction, and self-centeredness, which demands everything for the person it indwells.

A society in which such sentiments were shared, where the members gathered together in order to learn from spirits – and not only in the hope of seeing more or less interesting novelties or making their own opinions prevail – would not only be viable but indissoluble as well. The difficulty involved in bringing several members together in a homogenous manner leads us to state that in the interest of the studies and for the good of the cause itself, Spiritist societies should aim at creating small groups instead of large associations. These groups, corresponding with one another, visiting one another and exchanging observations could soon form the nucleus of a large Spiritist family that would someday bring together all opinions, uniting men and women in the same sentiment of fraternity, sealed by Christian charity.

335. We have already seen the importance of uniformity of sentiment for obtaining good results. This uniformity is naturally more difficult to achieve when a large number of persons are involved. In small groups, where everyone knows one another better, there is more security when new members join. Silence and

concentration become easier and everything happens as if it were at home. Large gatherings do not allow intimacy because of the variety of their members. They require special locales, monetary resources and an administrative body, which small groups can do without. The divergence of characters, ideas and opinions is more defined, enabling troublesome spirits to sow discord more easily. The larger the group, the harder it is to please everyone. All want projects carried out according to their own wishes, and want preference to be given to subjects that most interest them. Some would even believe that the title of member gives them the right to impose their own points of view. Then, there would be conflict, which is the cause of ill will. This would sooner or later lead to disunion and afterwards to dissolution, the fate of all societies under such conditions, whatever their purpose may be. Small groups are not subject to such problems, however. The disbanding of a large society would look like a failure for the Spiritist cause, and its enemies would not hesitate to exploit it. The dissolution of a small group would pass unnoticed; if one disbands, twenty others would take its place, and twenty groups of fifteen to twenty persons will obtain more and do more for the spread of Spiritism than one assembly of three hundred to four hundred.

It may obviously be said that the members of a society, acting as we have stated, could not be true Spiritists, since the first duty the Doctrine imposes is charity and benevolence. This is perfectly correct, and that is why those who behave like that are Spiritists more in name than in fact – they do not belong to the third category (see no. 28). But who could say that they could even be called Spiritists at all? This is a fairly serious matter to ponder.

336. Let us not forget that Spiritism has enemies who are interested in preventing its development and who despise its successes. The most dangerous are not those who attack it openly, but those who act behind the scenes; those who caress it with one

hand while stabbing it with the other. These malfeasant beings infiltrate everywhere they can do evil, and knowing that there is strength in unity, they try to destroy it by sowing discord. Who will thus say that those who cause trouble and discord in meetings are not adversarial agents interested in disorder? They are certainly neither true nor good Spiritists – they will never do any good but can cause much evil. We know that it is much easier for them to infiltrate large societies than small groups, where everybody knows one another. Thanks to secret maneuvers that go by unnoticed, they sow doubt, distrust and disaffection. Under the hypocritical appearance of interest for the cause, they criticize everything and form intimate and exclusive groups that soon break up the harmony of the whole – that is what they want. When dealing with such individuals it is useless to appeal to the sentiments of charity and fraternity. It would fall on deaf ears because their objective is precisely the destruction of such sentiments, which are the biggest obstacle to their maneuvers. This situation, which is harmful to all societies, is even more so to Spiritist societies, for if it does not lead to an outright rupture, it will cause concerns that are incompatible with the concentration and attention needed.

337. If a meeting is going badly – they will ask – don't sensible and well-intentioned individuals have the right to criticize, and if they ignore the problems without saying anything, aren't they approving it through their silence? Of course, they have such a right – it is even a duty – but if their intentions are truly good, they will issue their warning appropriately and kindly, and will do so openly and without any subterfuge. If they are not listened to, they will withdraw because it is inconceivable that anyone who is not acting with ulterior motives would persist in remaining in a society whose orientation was not appropriate for them.

We can thus establish in principle that anyone in a Spiritist meeting who causes disorder or disharmony either ostensibly or

secretly, through any means, is an adversarial agent, or at least an evil spirit who must be gotten rid of as soon as possible. Nonetheless, the very commitment which links the members of a meeting together creates obstacles to doing so, which is why it is proper to avoid indissoluble commitments. Moral individuals always connect with one another in an appropriate way, whereas bad-intentioned ones always do it to excess.

338. Besides notoriously malevolent persons who infiltrate meetings, there are those who, because of their very temperament, bring trouble wherever they go. Thus, too much care cannot be taken in admitting new members. The most harmful in this case are not those who are ignorant about the subject or even those who are disbelievers – conviction can only be acquired through experience, and there are well-intentioned persons who want to learn. Rather, those who should most particularly be cautioned against are persons given to preconceived ideas, the theoretical disbelievers who question everything – even the obvious – and the proud who pretend to be privileged with the truth and always try to impose their opinions while disdaining whoever does not think as they do. Do not be fooled by their pretended desire to learn. You will encounter many who would feel displeased if they were obligated to agree that they had been wrong. Above all, guard yourselves against those insipid talkers who always want the last word, and those who only like to argue – they are both a waste of time and are of no use even to themselves. Spirits do not like idle words.

339. In light of the need to avoid every cause of trouble and distraction, when a Spiritist society is organized, it should place all its attention on establishing appropriate measures to keep troublemakers from doing any harm and to facilitate their leaving by any means possible. Smaller groups need very simple disciplinary rules for determining the order of their

sessions. Regularly constituted societies require a more complete organization, and the best would be the least complicated system. Either type would be able to derive what is applicable or necessary from the regulations of the Parisian Society for Spiritist Studies, which we present below.

340. Small or large societies, and all meetings, no matter how important they are, must struggle against a further problem. Troublemakers are not only found amongst their members but also in the invisible world, and just as there are protector spirits for institutions, cities and nations, malevolent spirits also connect to groups and individuals. First, they connect with the weakest and most accessible, trying to transform them into their instruments and gradually involving everybody, for their malignant joy is as great as the number of those they have subjugated. Thus, every time a group member has fallen into their trap, it means that there is an enemy about, a wolf in the fold, and great caution must be taken because it is quite probable that it will increase its attempts. If such a member is not discouraged through strong resistance, obsession will spread like a contagion, which will appear among the mediums through a disturbance of their mediumship and among the others through mutual hostility, moral perversion and destruction of harmony. Since the most powerful antidote against this poison is charity, it is what they try hardest to stifle. Thus, groups must not wait until the evil becomes incurable before applying the remedy; in fact, they must not even wait for the first symptoms, for it is especially necessary to prevent them from appearing in the first place. There are two effective ways to do this if done correctly: heart-felt prayer and the attentive study of the smallest symptoms that reveal the presence of deceptive spirits. The former attracts good spirits, who zealously assist only those who help them through their trust in God; the latter shows evil spirits that they are dealing with persons who are sufficiently

enlightened and sensible enough not to allow themselves to be deceived. If members of the group fall under the influence of obsessions, all efforts should be geared toward opening their eyes from the moment of the first indications, before the evil grows worse, in order to lead them to the understanding that they have been deceived and to instill in them the desire to help those who are trying to free them.

341. The influence of the surroundings derives from the nature of the spirits and the way in which they act upon human beings. From this influence we can deduce for ourselves the most favorable conditions for a society that aspires to attracting the sympathy of good spirits for obtaining worthwhile communications and avoiding bad ones. These conditions depend entirely on the moral character of the participants and may be summed up as follows:

Perfect commonality of ideas and sentiments;

Mutual benevolence among the members;

Rejection of every sentiment contrary to true Christian charity;

A single desire to learn and improve through good spirits' teachings and the taking advantage of their counsels. Whoever is convinced that highly evolved spirits manifest for the purpose of enabling us to progress, and not simply to please us will understand that they must avoid those who limit themselves to admiring their style without profiting from their words, and who are only attracted to sessions due to the greater or lesser interest they offer according to their individual tastes;

Avoidance of anything in communicating with spirits that is intended solely for satisfying one's curiosity;

Respectful concentration and silence during conversations with spirits;

Association of all participants through thought when evoking spirits;

Harmony amongst all mediums, rejecting any sentiment of pride, vanity and superiority, while supporting the sole desire to make themselves useful.

Are these conditions so difficult to fulfill that no one will be able to meet them? We do not think so. Instead, we hope that truly serious groups like those that already exist in various places will multiply, and we do not hesitate to state that Spiritism owes it broadest growth to them. By uniting serious and conscientious men and women, they will impose silence on our critics, and the purer their intentions, the more they will be respected, even by their adversaries. *When mockery attacks what is truly good, it fails to elicit laughter and instead becomes despicable.* Among groups of this type, ties of true sympathy will be formed along with mutual solidarity through the very force of the circumstances, thereby contributing to overall progress.

342. It would be wrong to suppose that meetings especially dedicated to physical manifestations are exempt from this fraternal harmony and the requirement of seriousness. Even if they do not require such strict conditions, it does not mean they can be frivolously held and observed with impunity. It would also be wrong to think that the concurrence of the participants is unimportant during such sessions. Proof to the contrary is in the fact that frequently the manifestations of this kind, even when produced by well-gifted mediums, cannot be obtained in certain surroundings. Contrary influences also act upon these manifestations, and it is certain that such influences result from differences in or hostility of the participants' sentiments, which neutralize the spirits' efforts.

Physical manifestations, as we have stated, are very useful. They open up a vast field to observers because an entirely new order of strange phenomena unfolds in front of them, the consequences of which are incalculable. Therefore, meetings can have a serious purpose in being occupied with these phenomena, but they will not attain their objective as a means of study or proof for strengthening

convictions if such meetings are not held under favorable conditions. The participants' faith is not the first condition; rather, the first condition is their desire to be enlightened, without ulterior motives or the preconceived thought to reject everything outright, even the evidence. The second condition is a reduced number of participants in order to avoid heterogeneity. Even though physical manifestations are usually produced by little-evolved spirits, it does not mean that their purpose is any less providential. Good spirits supervise them whenever a useful result may be realized.

Subjects for Study

343. Evocations of relatives and friends or certain famous personages in order to compare their post-death opinions with those they held while alive frequently run into difficulties when the conversation deteriorates into banalities and futilities. Many persons believe that *The Spirits' Book* has exhausted all moral and philosophical questions. That is incorrect, which is why it may be useful to point out the source that may lead to new and unlimited study themes.

344. If evoking illustrious individuals and highly evolved spirits is very useful because of the teachings they can provide, ordinary spirits are no less important, even though they cannot resolve problems of a large scope. They themselves reveal their low position in the hierarchy, and the less the distance that separates them from us, the more we realize that their situation is analogous to our own, not to mention the fact that they frequently offer us characteristic traits of great interest, as we have explained in no. 281 in dealing with the usefulness of private evocations. It is thus an inexhaustible source of observations even if we limit ourselves to evoking spirits who, in their present life, offer us some particularity involving the type of death they suffered, their age,

their good or evil qualities, their happy or disgraceful position while on earth, their habits, mental state, etc.

The field of study broadens with high order spirits. Besides psychological questions, which have their limit, we can ask them an infinite number of moral questions about all life's situations, the best behavior for this or that circumstance, our mutual duties, etc. The worth of the instruction we receive concerning any moral, historical, philosophical or scientific subject depends entirely on the state of the spirit addressed; it is our responsibility to judge it.

345. Besides evocations per se, spontaneous communications offer a large number of study topics. In such cases, we only have to wait for the spirits themselves to bring up their chosen subject. In such circumstances, several mediums can work simultaneously. Sometimes we can call to a particular spirit, but normally we must wait for those who want to come, and they often do so in an unforeseen manner. These communications can then provide a huge number of study issues, whose themes have been prepared beforehand. They must be cautiously discussed in order to analyze all the ideas they present to see if they bear any stamp of truthfulness. Such a thorough examination is the best guarantee against the interference of deceptive spirits, as we have said. For this reason, communications received outside the meetings should be brought to the group meetings so that everyone may scrutinize them and benefit from them. Thus, we obviously have an inestimable source of highly valuable and instructive elements.

346. Activities for each mediumistic meeting may be arranged as follows:

1st) A reading of spirits' communications received during the previous mediumistic meeting after they have been reviewed and revised.

2nd) *Various reports*: correspondence, reading of communications received outside the mediumistic meetings, report on facts of interest to Spiritism.

3rd) *Study materials*: spontaneous dictations, various issues and moral problems proposed to spirits, evocations.

4th) *Examination*: critical and analytical examination of the various communications, discussion about various problems of the Spiritist Science.

347. Groups that are just starting out are often faced with a lack of mediums. Mediums are certainly essential elements for Spiritist meetings, but they are not indispensable, and it would be incorrect to suppose that there is nothing that can be done without them. Obviously, mediums are necessary for a meeting intended to conduct experiments just as musicians are required for a concert, but when the purpose is serious study, there are many useful and profitable issues that group members may address by themselves. Moreover, groups that depend on mediums can accidentally lose them, and it would be a shame to believe there was therefore nothing more to do except disband. Spirits themselves can for certain periods lead groups into this situation in order to teach them to get along without mediums. We might add that this may even be necessary so that the group profits more from the teachings, allowing it to dedicate a certain amount of time to meditate on them. Scientific societies do not always have instruments required for observation available, and yet that does not mean they have nothing to discuss. In the absence of poets and speakers, literary societies read and discuss the works of ancient and modern authors, while religious societies encourage meditation upon the Scriptures. Spiritist societies should do the same and it will be to their great advantage to promote conferences where participants read and discuss everything involving Spiritism – both pros and cons. Such a discussion, in which all participants make a contribution from their own reflections, can result in rays of light that would otherwise go unnoticed in a private reading. Alongside special works, newspapers also contribute facts, news, articles, and reports

on the virtues and vices that give rise to serious moral problems, whose solution only Spiritism can provide. This is also a way to show that it is connected to all aspects of societal life. We would maintain that a Spiritist society that organizes its work in this sense, arming itself with the necessary materials, will not have to wait very long for direct spirit communications. That is why we have called attention to truly serious groups at this point, groups that most ardently desire to learn rather than to try and find a pastime. (See no. 207 in the chapter *The Development of Mediums*).

Rivalries among Societies

348. Each group that deals exclusively with intelligent communications and each group dedicated to physical manifestations has its own mission. However, neither type would be in harmony with the true spirit of Spiritism if they were to regard each other as rivals. The one who “cast the first stone” would simply prove that it was dominated by evil influences. Although approaches may differ, all must concur in the common objective, which is research and the spreading of the truth. Any antagonism, which is actually nothing more than excited pride, would supply weapons to detractors and would therefore harm the cause such groups mean to defend.

349. These last considerations apply equally to all groups that may differ on certain doctrinal points. As we stated in the chapter on *Contradictions*, these differences are most of the time based on side issues or even upon simple words. Hence, it would be puerile to fragment a group to form another just because members do not think exactly the same. It would be even worse if different groups or societies in the same city mutually regarded one another with jealousy. We know that jealousy between individuals who compete with each other can cause reciprocal physical harm,

but when there is no speculation, jealousy is nothing more than trivial rivalry provoked by self-importance. Since it is impossible for a society to bring all adherents together in one place, those who truly want to spread the truth, who have an exclusively moral objective, should be very pleased at the appearance of new groups, and if there is any competition between them, it should only be geared toward excelling in the area of the good. Those who claim to be in exclusive possession of the truth will have to prove it in light of this motto: *love and charity*, for this is the motto of all true Spiritists. Do they pride themselves on the superiority of the spirits who assist them? Let them prove it by the superiority of the teachings they receive and by practicing them. This is an infallible criterion to distinguish those who are on the best path.

Some spirits, who are more presumptuous than logical, sometimes try to impose strange and impractical systems under the prestige of the venerable names they adorn themselves with. Common sense makes quick work of these utopias, however, but in the meantime, they can sow doubt and uncertainty among members. This often causes momentary disagreement. Besides the means that we have spelled out for evaluating such systems, there is another criterion that can provide an exact measure of their worth: the number of followers they recruit. Reason says that the system most accepted by the masses should be closer to the truth than the one rejected by the majority, who see their members disappear. Thus, we can be sure that when spirits reject the examination of their own teachings, it is because they know how weak they are.

350. If Spiritism is to transform humankind – as has been averred – it can only do so by improving the masses, which will happen only gradually, little by little, as individuals themselves improve. What good is it to believe in the existence of spirits if such belief does not make one better, kinder and more accepting of one's fellow beings, and humbler and more patient in adversity?

What good would it do to those who are greedy to be Spiritists if they continue to be greedy; to the proud if they continue to be full of themselves; to the envious if they remain jealous? Thus, everyone could believe in the manifestations, yet humankind could remain at a standstill – as we have seen. This is not how God intends it, however. It is toward a providential purpose that all serious Spiritist societies should tend, grouping together all those who have the same sentiments. Then, there will be unity, sympathy and fraternity among them, rather than any vain and childish antagonism provoked by self-centeredness; there will be more good deeds than mere words. Then, they will be strong and powerful because they are supported on an unshakable foundation: the good of all. Then, they will be respected and will silence all mockers because they will speak in the name of the evangelical morality respected by all.

This is the course along which we have endeavored to take Spiritism. The flag we have raised on high is that of *Christian and humanitarian Spiritism*, around which we are happy to see so many people gathered on all points of the earth because they understand that the anchor of salvation, the safeguard of public order, the sign of a new era for humankind is to be found there. We invite all Spiritist societies to participate in this great work. From one end of the world to the other, may they extend the hand of fraternity, and thereby they shall snare evil in the laces of an inextricable web.

CHAPTER XXX



Regulations of the Parisian Society for Spiritist Studies

*Regulations of the Parisian Society for Spiritist Studies*³⁷,
founded on April 1, 1858, authorized by Decree of the Chief of Police

³⁷ Translator's note: In her 1876 English version of the Mediums' Book, Anna Blackwell did not include Chapter XXX. It contains the Constitution and By-laws of the Parisian Society for Psychological Studies, which was superseded by the Joint-Stock Company for the Continuation of the Works of Allan Kardec. Kardec had just finished writing the last line of that entity's Constitution about an hour before his death. Ms. Blackwell replaced the chapter with a brief description of the Society's meetings, which we have included here and have updated into modern English for historical and informative purposes.

"The Society met every Friday evening at 8 p.m. at the residence of its President [Kardec himself], which during the latter part of his life was on St. Anne Street. The meetings were strictly private, but admission to them by letters of invitation was easily obtained. The proceedings always began with a short prayer, asking of the Almighty that good spirits would be sent to take part in them, evil ones be kept away, light be given for distinguishing truth from falsehood, the mediums be impressed with a sense of the sacredness of their mission, the incredulous and hostile be helped to a better mind, and the Spirit-President of the Society (Saint Louis) be enabled to watch over and assist the meeting. Then followed a reading of the minutes of the preceding meeting, the reports and correspondence addressed to the Parisian Society by similar societies in France and elsewhere, the reading and discussion of the mediumistic communications obtained at the preceding meeting or sent to the Society by other societies or by individuals, the consideration of some question of moral or scientific interest, or the evocation of some particular spirit as previously agreed upon. Next, all the mediums present seated themselves around a long table and wrote under the influence of the spirits with whom they were in sympathy. These communications were usually in prose, occasionally in verse and often very fine. They sometimes offered interesting peculiarities, such as names, dates or statements of facts, etc., unknown to the medium, but subsequently ascertained to have been

on April 13, 1858, according to notice from the Secretary of the Interior and National Security.

Although these regulations are the result of experience, we do not provide them as a required model. Their sole purpose here is to aid start-up societies, which may take as guidelines the provisions they consider useful and applicable to their own set of circumstances. Even though they are presented in simplified form, their structure may be reduced still further with small individual groups, which only need to establish measures for their internal structure, precautions and regularity of their work.

We also offer them as information to persons who want to establish relations with the Parisian Society, either by correspondence or as integrated members.

Purpose and Composition of the Society

Article 1 – The Society’s purpose is to study all the phenomena related to spirit manifestations and their application to the moral, physical, historical and psychological sciences. Issues involving politics, religious controversy or social economics are forbidden.

It shall take the name: *Parisian Society for Spiritist Studies*.

Article 2 – The Society shall be composed of registered members, free associates and correspondence members.

correct. Additionally, sometimes a trance-medium would be controlled by a spirit, giving rise to episodes of vivid or even tragic interest. A communication of exceptional acumen or beauty, or perhaps a short but pithy comment from St. Louis was frequently received at the close of a discussion in reference to the point that had been under consideration. When all the mediums had ceased writing, each of them took turns reading aloud the communication which he or she had been made to write. The proceedings ended at about 10:30 with a short form of thanks for the presence of the spirits who had taken part in them, and of prayer for any perverse or unhappy spirits who might have been brought to the meeting by their spirit-guides.

“The communications obtained on these occasions, as well as those sent to the Society from out-of-town, were by universal consent regarded as being the property of the Society, were copied into ‘Registers’ kept for that purpose, and deposited among its ‘Archives’. They furnished the materials from which Allan Kardec successively compiled *The Mediums’ Book*, *Heaven and Hell*, *The Gospel according to Spiritism*, and *Genesis*.”

It may confer honorary membership on individuals residing in France or abroad, who by their position or work may provide an important service to it. Honorary members are subject to annual reelection.

Article 3 – The Society shall only admit individuals who sympathize with its principles and the objective of its projects, those who have already been initiated into the fundamental principles of Spiritist Science, or those who are seriously animated by the desire for instruction in it. Consequently, it shall exclude all who may bring trouble to its meetings, either through a hostile attitude and theoretical disagreement or for any other reason that may cause a waste of time on needless argumentation.

All members are mutually obligated to display benevolence and good manners, and in all circumstances must place the general good above personal issues and self-importance.

Article 4 – To be admitted as a free associate, the request must be made in writing to the President, supported by the signature of two full members, who will be responsible for the intentions of the postulant.

The request must state: 1) if the postulant already possesses an understanding of Spiritism; 2) what his/her convictions are concerning the fundamental points of Spiritist Science; 3) a promise to fully comply with these regulations.

The request shall be submitted to the commission, which, depending on the case, shall propose admission, postponement or rejection.

Postponement is required for every candidate who does not yet possess any understanding of Spiritist Science or does not sympathize with the Society's principles.

Free associates have the right to attend all mediumistic meetings, to participate in activities and study groups, but will have no right to vote on administrative matters of the Society.

Free associates shall only be such during the year of their admission and permanent membership in the Society must be ratified at the end of that year.

Article 5 – To be a full member it is necessary to have been a free associate for at least one year, to have attended more than half the mediumistic meetings and to have given during that time obvious proof of the applicant's understanding of his/her convictions concerning Spiritism, his/her adhesion to the Society's principles and his/her willingness to act according to the principles of charity and Spiritist morality in all circumstances involving colleagues.

Free associates who have regularly attended the Society's mediumistic meetings for six months may be admitted as full members if they have also fulfilled the other conditions.

Admission shall be proposed *ex officio* with the consent of the associate if supported by three full members. Next, and depending on the case, it shall be submitted to the vote of the Society by secret ballot after a verbal report by the commission.

Only full members have the right to vote and to enjoy the rights granted in Article 25.

Article 6 – If it deems it appropriate, the Society shall limit the number of free associates and full members.

Article 7 – Correspondence members are those who do not reside in Paris, but who maintain relations with the Society and furnish it with documents that may be useful for its studies. They may be nominated through the presentation of only one full member.

Administration

Article 8 – The Society shall be administered by a Director-President, assisted by members of a board and commission.

Article 9 – The board shall be comprised of a President, Vice-President, General Secretary, two Assistant Secretaries and a Treasurer.

One or more Honorary Presidents may be appointed.

In the absence of the President and Vice-President, the mediumistic meetings shall be presided over by one of the commission members.

Article 10- The Director-President shall dedicate all his/her attention to the interests of the Society and Spiritist Science. He/she is responsible for the general direction and supervision of administration, as well as the maintenance of the archives. The President is appointed for three years, and the other members of the board for one year, eligible to be reelected indefinitely.

Article 11 – The Commission is comprised of board members and five other full members, chosen from amongst those who have taken an active role in the Society's projects, have rendered service to the cause of Spiritism, or have revealed a benevolent and conciliatory spirit. These five members, like those of the board, are appointed for one year and may be reelected.

The Commission is eligibly presided over by the Director-President, or in his/her absence, by the Vice-President or by one of its members designated for the purpose.

The Commission is in charge of examining beforehand all the administrative issues, proposals, and other matters, which must be submitted to the Society: controlling the receipts and expenses of the Society, and the accounts of the treasury; authorizing ordinary expenses and all measures deemed necessary.

It shall also examine study materials proposed by various members, formulate them on their behalf, and set the order of the mediumistic meetings according to the President.

The President may always oppose the examination of certain subjects and their placement on the agenda, except when he/she appeals to the board, which shall decide.

The Commission shall meet regularly before the mediumistic meetings begin in order to examine the subjects at hand, and also at any other time deemed appropriate.

The members of the board and commission who are absent for three consecutive months without a justifiable excuse shall be considered to have renounced their duties and shall be replaced.

Article 12 – Decisions of either the Society or the Commission shall be made by the absolute majority of the members present; in case of a tie vote, the President shall cast the deciding vote.

The Commission may deliberate with a quorum of four members. Vote by secret ballot shall be taken if requested by five members.

Article 13 – Every three months, six members chosen from among the full members or free associates shall be appointed to fulfill the functions of *Commissioners*.

Commissioners are in charge of supervising the order and proper conducting of the mediumistic meetings, and verifying the right of participation by any outside person who would like to attend.

To do so, designated members shall agree amongst themselves which one will be present at the opening of the mediumistic meetings.

Article 14 – The business year shall begin April 1. Appointments to the board and Commission shall be made at the first May mediumistic meeting. Incumbent members shall continue their duties until then.

Article 15 – To cover the Society's expenses, an annual fee of 24 francs shall be charged to full members and 20 francs to free associates.

Full members shall also pay a fee of 10 francs at their admission. The fee is paid in full for the year in progress.

Members admitted during the year shall only pay for the quarters remaining, calculated from the date of admission.

Whenever a husband and wife are accepted as free associates or full members, they shall only be required to pay between them one and a half times the normal fee.

Every six months – on April 1 and October 1 – the Treasurer shall render an accounting to the Commission for the use and situation of the funds.

After current expenses for rent and other necessities have been paid, the Society shall determine the use of any balance left over.

Article 16 – A membership card stating their status shall be given to all who are admitted as free associates and full members. This card shall remain with the Treasurer until the new member can pick it up after having paid his/her admission fee. The new member may not attend any mediumistic meetings before picking up the card. Failure to do so within one month of admission shall mean that the member is regarded as having resigned.

Every member who has not paid the annual fee within the first month of the beginning of the business year shall also be regarded as having resigned if he/she has not heeded the warning sent by the Treasurer.

Mediumistic Meetings

Article 17 – The Society's mediumistic meetings are to be held on Fridays at 8:00 p.m. unless changed as needed.

Mediumistic meetings may be either private or general and are never open to the public.

Every member of the Society, regardless of status, should sign an attendance sheet at each mediumistic meeting.

Article 18 – Silence and concentration are strictly required during the mediumistic meetings, and especially during study time. No one may speak without the President's permission.

All questions asked of the spirits shall go through the President, who may refuse to ask them, depending on the circumstances.

All pointless questions, or those of personal interest or involving mere curiosity, or those whose aim is to test the spirits are strictly prohibited, as well as all those that do not have a generally useful purpose from a study point of view.

Equally prohibited are all discussions that are off the subject.

Article 19 – Every member has the right to ask anyone who departs from appropriateness during the discussion or who disturbs the mediumistic meeting in any way to be brought to order. The request shall immediately be put to a vote, and once approved, it shall be written in the minutes.

Three warnings within a year shall warrant dismissal of the member, whatever his/her status may be.

Article 20 – No spirit communication obtained outside the Society may be read without having been submitted to the President or the Commission, who may or may not approve its reading.

One copy of each outside communication, whose reading has been authorized, must be kept on file.

All communications obtained during the mediumistic meetings belong to the Society, but the mediums who received them may keep a copy.

Article 21 – Closed mediumistic meetings are reserved for Society members and shall be held on the first, third, and, if applicable, on the fifth Friday of each month.

The society reserves for individual mediumistic meetings all questions concerning administration, as well as study materials that require greater peacefulness and concentration, or which it deems proper to delve into before being addressed in the presence of outside individuals.

Besides full members and free associates, correspondence members passing through Paris, and mediums who lend their help to the Society, have the right to attend closed mediumistic meetings.

No outside person shall be admitted to closed mediumistic meetings, except in exceptional cases and with the prior consent of the President.

Article 22 – General mediumistic meetings shall be held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays of each month.

During general mediumistic meetings, the Society authorizes admitting outside observers, who may attend them temporarily without taking part in them. Such authorization may be suspended when deemed appropriate.

No one may attend mediumistic meetings as an observer without having been introduced to the President by a Society member, who shall be entrusted with ensuring that his/her guest will not cause trouble or interrupt the mediumistic meeting.

The Society only admits persons as auditors those who want to become members or those who are interested in its work and have already been sufficiently initiated into Spiritist Science to understand it. Anyone who wants to attend only out of curiosity, or whose opinions are hostile, must absolutely be refused admission.

An auditor is forbidden to speak except in exceptional cases as the President sees fit. Anyone who disturbs the order in any way or expresses ill will toward the Society's work may be invited to leave, and in all cases the fact shall be noted on the attendance sheet. He/she shall be refused entry in the future.

The number of auditors shall be limited to the available seats, and those who can attend the mediumistic meetings shall be written down beforehand, making mention of who recommended them and their address. Consequently, every request for admittance to a session must be made to the President several days beforehand. The President is the only one authorized to grant admission cards until the list ends.

Cards are only good for the day indicated and for the persons so designated.

Permission cannot be granted to the same auditor for more than two sessions, except by the President's authorization and for exceptional cases. No member may introduce more than two persons at a time. There is no set limit on the number of admissions that may be granted by the President.

Auditors are not to be admitted after the mediumistic meetings has begun.

Miscellaneous Dispositions

Article 23 – All members of the Society owe it their cooperation. Therefore, they have the duty to gather within their respective circle of observation those old or recent cases that can be linked to Spiritism and communicate them. At the same time and whenever possible, they shall inquire about the notoriety of such cases.

They also have the duty to list all publications that may have a more or less direct relation with the objective of Spiritism's projects.

Article 24 – The Society shall critique the various works published on Spiritism whenever it considers it appropriate. In order to do so, it shall entrust one of its full members or free associates with writing an opinion, which will be published in *Revue Spirite*, when deemed appropriate.

Article 25 – The Society shall build a special library comprised of works that have been offered to it and that it acquires. At the Society's headquarters, full members may use this library and the archives on days and at times set for this purpose.

Article 26 – Considering that its responsibility may be morally compromised by private publications made by its members, the Society has determined that no one shall use the title *Society Member* in any writing without having been authorized to do so and without having made the text known beforehand. The Commission shall be in charge of making a report on the matter. If the Society regards the writing as incompatible with its principles, the author, after having been heard out, will be invited to modify it or renounce its publication, or not to publish it under the title *Society Member*. If he/she does not wish to abide by the decision, he/she may be expelled.

Any writing published anonymously by a Society member without any clues as to whom the author belongs to the category of ordinary publications, and the Society reserves the right to evaluate it. However, without wanting to hinder the free expression of personal opinion, the Society invites its members who intend to publish in this manner to ask for its official opinion beforehand in the interest of the Science.

Article 27 – Since the Society desires to maintain within itself the unity of the principles and spirit of mutual benevolence, it may expel any member who becomes a source of trouble or who expresses open hostility against it through writings that compromise the Doctrine, who holds subversive opinions or through any procedure of which the Society cannot approve. There shall be no expulsion, however, except after an unheeded warning, and after hearing the guilty member out, if he/she wishes to offer an explanation. The decision shall be made in top secret by a majority of three fourths of the members present.

Article 28 – Every member who withdraws voluntarily during the course of the year cannot request a proportional refund of his/her fee. However, such refund shall be made if the member is expelled by the Society.

Article 29 – These regulations shall be modified as necessary. Proposals for modification shall be made only through the President, to whom they shall be transmitted after having been accepted by the Commission.

Without modifying the regulations on essential points, the Society may adopt all supplementary measures it deems appropriate.

CHAPTER XXXI



Dissertations by Spirits

In this chapter we have collected a number of spontaneous communications, which complete and conform to the principles set forth in this work. We could have included a larger number, but we have limited ourselves to those that most particularly have a bearing on the future of Spiritism, mediums and meetings. We give them for the instruction they provide and as models of truly serious communications. We end the chapter with a few apocryphal communications, along with observations that will help in recognizing them as such.

Concerning Spiritism

I

“Have confidence in the goodness of God and endeavor to understand that he³⁸ is preparing a new destiny for you. It is true that you will not be able to enjoy this new life in your present existence, but if you did not have to live again on this globe, wouldn't you be happy if you could contemplate from a higher place the work

³⁸ In order to maintain the personal nature of the communications in this chapter, we have retained the traditional pronouns with reference to God – Tr.

that you had begun and watch it develop? Be solid in your faith and do not waver so that you may confront the obstacles that may arise against the edifice whose groundwork you have laid. The foundation upon which that edifice is supported is firm – Christ himself laid its first stone. Therefore, take heart, architects of the divine Master! Work and build – God will crown your endeavors. But remember that Christ does not regard as disciples those who only talk about charity. It is not enough to merely believe; rather, you must take special care to exemplify goodness, benevolence and disinterestedness, without which your faith will be sterile.”

St. Augustine

II

“Christ himself presides over the works of every kind that are being carried out in order to usher in the era of renewal and improvement, which has been foretold to you by your spirit guides. Actually, if you would look beyond the spirit manifestations and surmise current events, you will have no difficulty recognizing precursory signs, which will show you beyond any doubt, that the foretold time has come. Communications are opening up in every nation. When the material barriers are finally overcome, political and religious prejudices will rapidly disappear along with the moral obstacles that hinder unity. Thereby, the reign of fraternity will be solidly and durably established. Look how sovereigns themselves, impelled by an invisible hand, have already initiated reforms – something unheard of previously. Reforms that spontaneously start from above are quicker and more lasting than those that start from below by means of force.

“In spite of the prejudices of my childhood and education, and despite my memories, I already had a presentiment about the present era. I rejoice at this and rejoice even more at being able to come here and tell you: Brothers and sisters, take heart! Work for

yourselves and your future. Work especially for your own personal improvement, and in your next lifetime you will enjoy a happiness that is as difficult to imagine at present as it is for me to make you understand it.”

Chateaubriand

III

“I think that Spiritism is an entirely philosophical study of concealed causes and inner movements of the soul, which have been little-defined or not defined at all until today. It explains, more than it unveils, new horizons. Reincarnation and the trials that you must bear before arriving at the supreme goal are not mere revelations, but full confirmations of the truth. I am struck by the truths that are being brought to light *by means* of Spiritism. I say *means* intentionally because I view Spiritism as a lever that breaks down the barriers of blindness.

“Concern over moral issues is being awakened everywhere. Individuals are discussing political issues, and this awakens general interest; they discuss individual interests, and the attack on or defense of personalities awakens passions. Theories win supporters and detractors, but moral truths, the food of the soul – its bread of life – remain in the dust accumulated over the centuries. To human eyes, all forms of improvement seem useful except that of the soul. Its education and evolution seem like chimeras that only serve to occupy the leisure time of priests, poets, and women, whether as simple fashion or as formal instruction.

“If *Spiritism* breathes new life into *spiritualism*, it will provide society with the impulse that will awaken inner dignity in some and resignation in others, while in everyone it will awaken the need to evolve toward the Supreme Being, forgotten by and unknown to his ungrateful creatures.”

J.J. Rousseau

IV

“If God has sent the Spirits to instruct men and women, it is for the purpose of clarifying their duties, for showing them the path by which they may shorten their trials, and thereby quicken their advancement. In the same way that fruit ripens, humans will arrive at perfection. Nevertheless, alongside the good spirits, who watch over your welfare, there are also imperfect spirits, who wish you harm. While the former drive you forward, the latter pull you back, and distinguishing between the two is where you must direct all your attention. The way to do so is easy: simply try to understand that everything that comes from a good spirit cannot harm anyone, whereas everything from an evil spirit can only work harm.

“If you do not listen to the wise counsels of the Spirits who wish you well, if you are offended by the truths they tell you, it is obvious that you are under the influence of evil spirits. Only pride can keep you from seeing what you really are, but if you cannot see it yourself, others can see it for you, so that you are disapproved of by those who laugh at you behind your back – and by the Spirits.”

A Familiar Spirit

V

“Your Doctrine is beautiful and holy. Its first landmark has been planted and planted firmly. Now, you only need to press on – the path is open, grand and majestic. Blessed are they who reach port. The more converts you make, the greater will be your reward. To do so, however, you must not coolly embrace the Doctrine. You must embrace it ardently, and this ardor will increase because God is always with you whenever you practice what is good. All those whom you convert will be like sheep who have returned to the fold – poor sheep who had wandered away! Know that those who are most skeptical, the most atheistic and the most incredulous

always have a small corner in their heart that they would like to hide even from themselves. Well, you must seek out and find that tiny corner, for that is the vulnerable point to attack. It is a small crack that has been expressly left open by God as a means of enabling creatures to return to the divine arms.”

St. Benedict

VI

“Do not be alarmed by certain obstacles or controversies. Do not torment anyone by persistently trying to convert him or her. You will persuade disbelievers only by your disinterestedness, tolerance and charity toward all – without exception.

“Especially guard yourselves against violating public opinion, whether through simple words or public demonstration. The more modest you are, the more you will win the appreciation of others. Let no personal motive lead you to act, and you will find within your conscience a force of attraction that produces only goodness.

“Under God’s orders, the Spirits are working for the progress of all, without exception. You Spiritists must do likewise.”

St. Louis

VII

“What human or even divine institution has not had obstacles to overcome and schisms against which it has had to struggle? If it only had a sad and idle existence, no one would bother to attack it, knowing it would succumb sooner or later. However, since your vitality is strong and active, and since the Spiritist tree has deep roots, adversaries realize that it could live a long time and they try to take the hatchet to it. What can such envious people accomplish? They might cut off a few branches, but they will sprout again with new sap and they will be stronger than ever.”

Channing

VIII

“I would like to speak to you about the firmness you must have in your Spiritist labors. Regarding the matter, I have given you a scripture verse to study with all your heart and to apply to yourselves, for like St. Paul you will be persecuted, not in flesh and bone, but in spirit. The Pharisees and disbelievers of today will revile and insult you, but have no fear. Regard it as a trial that will strengthen you if you entrust yourselves to God, for then you will see your efforts crowned with success later on. This will be a great victory for you in the life to come, and in this world it will be a consolation for all who have lost relatives and friends. Realize that they are happy and that they are glad to be able to communicate with you. Therefore, carry on, fulfilling the mission that God has given you. It will be a reward for you on that day in which you appear before the Almighty.”

Channing

IX

“It is I who have come – your savior and your judge. I have come as I did long ago among the wayward children of Israel. I have come to bring truth and to disperse the darkness. Listen to me. As my words did long ago, Spiritism must remind materialists that the unchangeable truth reigns over them: the good God, the Almighty God, who causes the plants to grow and the ocean waves to rise. I have revealed the divine Doctrine. Like a reaper, I have gathered into bundles the good ones who were scattered among humankind and I have said: Come to me, all you who suffer!

“However, ungrateful humans have deserted the straight and broad path that leads to my Father’s kingdom and they have become lost in the rut-filled byway of impiety. My Father does not wish for the human race to perish. He will no longer speak through prophets or apostles; he wants you, both living and dead

(that is, dead according to the flesh, for in reality there is no death) to mutually help one another. He wants the voice of those who no longer exist amongst you to make itself heard as it cries out, 'Pray and believe'! for death is resurrection, and life is a trial that you have chosen, during which the virtues you have cultivated must grow and develop like a cedar tree.

"Believe in the voices that respond to you – they are the very souls of those whom you evoke. Rarely do I myself communicate. My friends, who beheld my life and death, are the divine interpreters of the designs of my Father.

"Frail men and women, you who have believed in the deception of your darkened minds, do not quench the flame that the divine mercy has placed in your hands to light the path and lead you like wayward children to the shelter of your Father.

"Truly, I say to you, believe in the diversity and *multiplicity* of the spirits who surround you. I am too full of compassion for your sufferings and great weaknesses not to extend a protective hand to your unfortunate wayward brothers and sisters who, while looking to heaven, have fallen into the abyss of error. Believe, love and comprehend the truths that are being revealed to you. Do not mix the tares with the good wheat, or theories with truths.

"Spiritists! Love one another – that is the first teaching; educate yourselves – that is the second. All truths may be found in Christianity. The errors that have taken root within it are of human origin. And from beyond the grave – where you think there is nothing – voices cry out: Brothers and sisters! Nothing perishes. Jesus Christ is the victor over evil. You yourselves, be victors over impiety."

This communication, obtained by one of the best mediums of the Paris Spiritist Society, was signed with a name that out of respect we could only reproduce with extreme reservation, so great would be the honor of its authentic signature, and because the name has already been much

abused in obviously apocryphal writings. It is that of Jesus of Nazareth. We have absolutely no doubt that he can manifest himself. However, if truly high order spirits only do so under exceptional circumstances, reason prevents us from believing that the Pure Spirit par excellence would respond to any appeal. It would be at the very least a great sacrilege to attribute an unworthy communication to him.

These considerations have led us always to avoid publishing anything bearing his name. We believe we can never be too cautious when dealing with publications of this type, which only appeal to vanity, and whose least inconvenience is to furnish weapons to the adversaries of Spiritism.

As we have stated, the more elevated the spirits in the hierarchy are, the more we should distrust signatures bearing their names. It would take a huge dose of pride for certain individuals to flatter themselves at having been privileged with their communications, deeming themselves worthy of conversing with them as if they were one of their equals. In the above communication, our only proof is the undeniable superiority of the language and thought, and we will leave to each person the care of appraising whether or not he who has signed it would reject it or not.

Concerning Mediums

X

“All men and women are mediums. All have a spirit that guides them in moral uprightness when they listen to it. Thanks to a special mediumship, some can communicate directly with this spirit, while others can only hear it through the inner voice of the heart and mind – this matters little, for it is always the same familiar spirit who counsels you. Call it spirit, reason or intelligence; it will always be a voice that responds to your soul, speaking valuable words to you. You do not always understand them, however. You

do not all know how to act according to the counsels of reason, not the kind of reason that drags itself along and crawls more than it advances; the kind of reason that loses itself in the maze of material and crude interests, but the kind of reason that lifts humans above themselves; the kind that transports them to unknown regions, the sacred flame that inspires the artist and poet, the divine idea that uplifts the philosopher, the impulse that delights both individuals and nations; the kind of reason that the common folk cannot comprehend but that uplifts men and women more than it does any other creature, and draws them close to God, the understanding that leads them from the known to the unknown and enables them to perform the most sublime acts. Therefore, heed that inner voice, that good spirit who never ceases speaking to you, and you will eventually be able to hear your guardian angel, who extends its hand to you from on high. I repeat: the inner voice that speaks to the heart is that of the good spirits, and it is from that point of view that all humans are mediums.”

Channing

XI

“The gift of mediumship is as ancient as the world itself. The prophets were mediums. The Eleusinian mysteries were founded upon mediumship. The Chaldeans and Assyrians had mediums. Socrates was guided by a spirit who inspired him with the wonderful principles of his philosophy – he listened to its voice. All cultures have had their mediums, and the inspirations of Joan of Arc were nothing more than the voice of the benefactor spirits who guided her. This gift, which today has expanded so much, had become extremely rare in medieval times, but never disappeared completely.

“Swedenborg and his disciples comprised a large school. The France of the last few centuries – mocking and geared toward

a philosophy, which, wanting to abolish the abuses of religious intolerance, suffocated in foolishness everything that was ideal – had to reject Spiritism, which has not ceased to spread in the north. God allowed this struggle of positive ideas against spiritualist ideas because fanaticism had been transformed into a weapon for the latter. Now that the progress of industry and science has developed this art of living well in such a way that materialistic tendencies have become dominant, God wills that minds be led back to the interests of the soul. He wills that the perfecting process of moral men and women be transformed into what it should be – the purpose and goal of life. The human spirit follows its necessary forward march of progress similar to the gradation through which all things in the visible and invisible universe pass. All progress occurs at the proper time – that of moral elevation has come upon humankind. It will not be completed during your days on earth, but thank the Lord for your having witnessed that blessed dawn.”

Pierre Jouty (father of the medium)

XII

“God has charged me with a mission, which I must accomplish together with believers blessed with the mediumistic mission. The more grace they receive from on high, the more dangers they will face, and these dangers are all the greater when they spring from the very favors God grants them. The faculties that mediums enjoy draw praise, compliments and adulations from others – therein lies their danger. These same mediums, who should always remember their former incapacity, nevertheless forget it. But they do even more: they attribute to their own merit what they owe to God alone. Then, what happens? Good spirits abandon them and they become the sport of evil ones, with no compass to guide them any longer. The more skillful they become, the more they are led to attribute to themselves a merit that does

not belong to them. God finally punishes them, taking away a faculty that could only be fatal.

“I could never remind you too often to ask for help from your guardian angel so that it may aid you in always remaining vigilant against your cruellest enemy – pride. Remember this well, you who have the fortune to be interpreters between spirits and humans: without the support of our divine Master, you will be punished even more severely because you have been favored more highly.

“I hope this communication is fruitful and I desire for it to help mediums to remain on their guard against the pitfall to which they could succumb. As I have said, that pitfall is pride.”

Joan of Arc

XIII

“Whenever you want to receive communications from good spirits, prepare yourselves for such grace through concentration, pure intentions and the desire to practice goodness for the overall general progress. Remember that selfishness always hinders evolution. Remember that if God allows some of you to receive the whisper of his children, who, by their conduct have merited the blessedness of comprehending the infinite divine goodness, it is because God has heeded our requests and has taken your good intentions into account, and thus wills to grant you the means of advancing on your path. Therefore, O mediums! take advantage of the faculty that God has granted you. Have faith in the goodwill of our Master. Always put charity into action. Never cease practicing either this noble virtue or tolerance. May your actions always be in harmony with your conscience. This is a sure way of increasing your happiness a hundredfold during this passing lifetime and of preparing you for an existence that will be a thousand-fold sweeter.

“May those mediums who do not feel they have the strength to persevere in the Spiritist teaching abstain, because if they do not

take advantage of the light that has dawned on them, they will be all the guiltier and will have to expiate their blindness.”

Pascal

XIV

“Today, I shall speak to you about non-profitableness, which must be one of the essential qualities of mediums, along with modesty and devotedness. God has given them this faculty in order for them to help spread the truth, but not for them to make it a business. I don’t mean only those who want to exploit it as they would a common faculty – those who set themselves up as mediums just as they would as dancers and singers – but rather all those who would mean to utilize mediumship for their own advantage of any kind.

“Would it be reasonable to suppose that good spirits – even more the high order Spirits who condemn cupidity – would consent to participating in exhibitions and place themselves at the disposal of a vender of spirit manifestations as though they were his accomplices? It is no more reasonable to suppose that good spirits would favor intentions based on pride and ambition. God allows them to communicate with humans in order to pull them out of the earthly mire and not to serve as instruments for mundane passions. Hence, God could not look favorably upon those who divert their God-given gift from its true purpose. I assure you that even in this world they will be punished for it with the bitterest disappointments.”

Delphine de Girardin

XV

“All mediums are incontestably called to serve the cause of Spiritism to the full measure of their faculties. However, there are few who do not allow themselves to be led by self-importance, which is a touchstone that is rarely without effect. Out of a hundred mediums, it may be possible to find only one, if any, who in the first stages of his or her mediumship – no matter

how humble his or her condition is – had not deemed him or herself destined to obtain superior results and predestined for grand missions. Those who succumb to such vain ambition – the number is great – inevitably become prey to obsessing spirits, who do not hesitate to subjugate them, arouse their pride and seize upon their weakness. The higher they desire to raise themselves, the more foolish-looking or even disastrous their fall will be.

“Grand missions are entrusted to exceptional men and women, and without their seeking it, God provides them with the means and position in which their concourse may be the most effective. Inexperienced mediums can never be reminded too often to distrust what certain spirits may tell them as to any pretentious role they are supposedly called to fulfill, for if they take it seriously, they will only reap disappointment in this world and harsh punishment in the other.

“Therefore, let mediums be convinced that they can render a grand service in the modest and obscure sphere in which they find themselves, helping to convert disbelievers or consoling the afflicted. If they must leave their obscurity, they will be led by an invisible hand, which will prepare the path for them and push them into the limelight (so to speak) in spite of themselves. Let them remember these words: *Those who would raise themselves up shall be brought low, and those who would lower themselves shall be raised up.*”

The Spirit Truth

Concerning Spiritist Meetings

Among the following communications, some were given at the *Parisian Society for Spiritist Studies* or addressed to it. Others were transmitted through various mediums and contain general advice concerning groups, their organization and the problems they may encounter.

XVI

“Why not begin your sessions with a general invocation, a kind of prayer that can gear your minds for concentration? Without mental reflection you will receive only frivolous communications. Good spirits only appear where they are fervently and sincerely called upon, but humans do not understand this fact very well. Thus, it is up to you to set an example, and if you want to, you may become one of the pillars of the new edifice. We have been observing your labors with satisfaction and have been helping you out, but on the condition that you also help us by proving that you are up to the mission you have been called to fulfill. Be united and you will be strong, and evil spirits will not prevail against you. God loves the simple of spirit, which does not mean fools, but those who renounce themselves and approach him without pride. You can become a beacon for humankind. Learn to distinguish between wheat and tares. Only sow wheat and avoid scattering tares, because they will prevent the wheat from sprouting and you will be responsible for all the resultant evil. Thus, you will be responsible for spreading any erroneous doctrines. Remember that someday the world may look to you, so fortify yourselves so that nothing can dim the glow from the good deeds that will result from your efforts. This is why we recommend that you ask God to assist you.”

St. Augustine

When we asked for a general invocation formula, St. Augustine responded:

“You know there is no set formula. God is too great to regard words as being more important than thought. Don’t suppose that all you have to do is say a few words to keep evil spirits away. Guard yourselves especially against using those banal formulas that are recited to unburden one’s conscience. Their effectiveness

only resides in sincere sentiments, and especially in unanimity of intent, for those who do not involve their heart will receive no benefit, nor will they be of any benefit to others. Write out a formula and submit it to me if you wish. I will help you.”

The following general invocation formula was drawn up with the help of this Spirit, who completed it at various points:

“We pray to Almighty God to send good spirits to assist us, and to keep from us all those who may induce us to error. Give us the light needed to distinguish truth from falsehood.

“Also, guard us from malevolent spirits who may spread disharmony in our midst by arousing envy, pride and jealousy. If any attempt to appear here, in your name, O Lord, we adjure them to withdraw.

“Good spirits, who preside over our labors, come and instruct us and make us amenable to your counsels. Extinguish every personal sentiment within us and replace it with thoughts for the general good.

“We especially ask ..., our spirit protector to send us its help today.”

XVII

“My friends, let me offer you some advice, because you are covering new ground, and if you follow the path we have shown you, you will not get lost. You were told a truth that we want you to remember: Spiritism is a moral code and it must not go beyond the borders of philosophy if you want to avoid falling into the mire of simple curiosity. Set scientific questions aside. It is not the Spirits’ mission to resolve them and in doing so save you from the efforts of your own research. Above all, try to improve yourselves, for that is what will truly help you evolve.”

St. Louis

XVIII

“They mocked the turning tables, but they shall never mock the philosophy, the wisdom and the charity that shine forth from

serious communications. The tables were the vestibule of the Spiritist Science, and those who enter it must leave behind their old preconceptions, as they would leave behind a cloak. I can never tire of asking you to make yours a center for serious work. Let those who induce physical manifestations do so wherever they will. *Let them observe elsewhere; let them hear elsewhere, but amongst yourselves, understand and love one another.* What do you suppose yourselves to look like to high order spirits when you make a table turn or rise into the air? Simple school children. Do scholars pass their time repeating the ABCs of their science? However, when they see that you are interested in serious communications, they regard you as serious individuals in search of the truth.”

St. Louis

We asked St. Louis if by this he was condemning physical manifestations and he responded:

“I cannot condemn such manifestations, since if they occur it is with God’s permission and for a useful purpose. By stating that they represented the vestibule of the Science, I assigned them to their true place and usefulness. I only disprove of those who produce them for amusement and out of curiosity without drawing upon their resultant teaching. They mean to the Spiritist Philosophy what grammar means to literature. Anyone who has reached a certain degree in a science does not waste any more time restudying its basics.”

XIX

“My friends and faithful believers, I am always happy to be able to guide you along the righteous path. It is a pleasant mission that God has granted to me and to which I am dedicated because being useful is always a reward.

“May the spirit of charity unite you; the charity that gives, as well as the charity that loves. Be patient with the slander of your detractors. Be firm in what is good and, especially, be humble before God. Only humility can raise you up, and it is the only grandeur that God recognizes. Only if you are humble will good spirits answer you; if not, evil ones will take control of your soul. Bless the name of the Creator, and you will grow in favor before both humans and God.”

St. Louis

XX

“Unity makes one strong. Be united in order to be strong. Spiritism has germinated, has set down deep roots and is going to spread its beneficent boughs over the earth. You must become invulnerable to the poisoned darts of slander and the dark phalanx of ignorant, selfish and hypocritical spirits. In order to do so, mutual tolerance and benevolence hold sway in your relationships. May your defects pass unnoticed and only your good qualities be seen; may the flame of pure friendship unite, illumine and warm your hearts. Then, you will be able to resist the powerful attacks of evil like the unshakable rock resists the crashing waves.”

Vincent de Paul

XXI

“My friends, you would like to form a Spiritist group and I approve of it because the Spirits do not like to see mediums remain isolated. God has not granted them their sublime faculty for their own use but for the general welfare. By being involved with others they will have a thousand opportunities to become enlightened as to the worth of the communications they receive, whereas alone they are more subject to being controlled by deceiving spirits, who are delighted at seeing a medium with no safeguards in place. This is what I leave with

you, and if you are not dominated by pride, you will understand and profit from it. And now, we shall move on to other matters.

“Do you truly know what a Spiritist meeting should be? No, because in your zeal you think the best thing to do is bring together the largest number of people possible in order to convince them. Do not be so sure. The fewer persons present, the more you will obtain. Moral ascendancy will bring disbelievers to your side much more effectively than physical phenomena. If you only attract them by means of phenomena, they will come to see them out of curiosity and you will encounter curious individuals who will not believe, but will rather laugh at your efforts. On the other hand, if there are only worthy persons amongst you, perhaps disbelievers will not change their minds immediately, but they will respect you and respect always inspires trust.

“Be convinced that Spiritism will produce moral reform. May your group be the first to set an example of Christian virtues, for during this time of selfishness true charity should find refuge in Spiritist societies. This is what a group of true Spiritists should be like, my friends. I will provide you with other counsels later.”

Fenelon

XXII

“You have asked whether or not a large number of groups in the same area might provoke rivalries that are harmful to the Doctrine. I will respond that if they have been imbued with the true principles of this Doctrine, they will see all Spiritists as brothers and sisters – not as rivals. Those who regard other groups with jealousy would thereby show that they had ulterior motives of self-interest or vanity, and that they were not guided by love for the truth. I can guarantee that if such persons were amongst you, they would soon cause trouble and disunity.

True Spiritism has *benevolence and charity* as its motto. It condones no other rivalry except in the amount of good that can be done. All groups that have inscribed this motto on their banner can hold hands as good neighbors, who are no less friends just because they do not live in the same house. Those who intend to have the best spirits as their guides should prove it by displaying better sentiments. Let there be a rivalry amongst them, but a rivalry of greatness of the soul, of self-denial, of goodness and humility. Whoever casts a stone at another would prove him or herself to be influenced by evil spirits. The nature of the sentiments that individuals express toward one another is the touchstone by which we can recognize the nature of the spirits who assist them.”

Fenelon

XXIII

“Silence and concentration are essential conditions for all serious communications. You will never receive such communications when attraction to your meetings results only from curiosity. So make sure that curiosity seekers go elsewhere for entertainment, for their distraction would be a cause of trouble.

“You must not tolerate any talking while the Spirits are being questioned. Sometimes you receive communications that require serious replies from you and responses that are no less serious from the Spirits you evoke, but who feel displeased when certain participants are whispering to each another. Nothing complete or truly serious can be received while they are doing so. Also, the mediums who are writing experience distractions that are very harmful to their work.”

St. Louis

XXIV

“I shall address the need for you to observe the greatest regularity when you hold your sessions, meaning that you must

avoid all confusion and divergence of ideas. Divergence invites the replacement of good spirits with evil ones, and when that happens they are the ones who respond to your questions. On the other hand, during a meeting composed of several participants who do not know one another, how can contradictory ideas, distraction and, worse yet, a vague and scoffing indifference be avoided? I would like to find some efficient and secure means for this. Perhaps it could be found in the concentration of the diffused fluids surrounding the mediums. It is they alone – especially the ones who are most highly regarded – who keep the good spirits at the meeting, but their influence can hardly dissipate the disturbance that frivolous spirits can cause. Your efforts at examining the communications are excellent.

You could never delve too much into studying the questions and especially the responses. Error is easy even for spirits with the best intentions. Slowness of writing, during which the spirit departs from the subject that is exhausted as soon as it is conceived, the spirit's mobility and its indifference toward certain conventional forms – all these reasons and many others make it your duty to trust very slightly what you receive and always to subject it to examination, even when dealing with authentic communications.”

Georges (A Familiar Spirit)

XXV

“What is your purpose most of the time in asking the Spirits to communicate? In order to obtain fine specimens of prose, which you can show to your acquaintances like samples of our talent, and which you can lovingly preserve in albums but without giving them a place in your heart? Do you think we are flattered at being able to attend your meetings as if they were a contest and eloquently argue using fine oratory so that you may say that the session was very interesting? What happens when you receive an

admirable communication? Do you think we want you to applaud us? Do not be so sure. We do not intend to entertain you one way or another. On your part, you are still driven by curiosity, and you try to conceal that fact in vain. Our purpose is to make you better.

“When we realize that our words have no effect, and that everything on your part is reduced to sterile approval, we seek out other souls who are more willing. We give way to spirits who only like to talk, who are never lacking in numbers. You wonder why we allow them to assume our names. What does that matter to you, since there is no difference one way or the other?

“You should know then that we would not allow this with those in whom we are truly interested; that is, those who do not waste our time. They are our favorites and we protect them from lies. You have only yourselves to blame if you are frequently fooled. For us, the serious individual is not the one who avoids laughter, but the one whose heart is touched by our words, who meditates on them and puts them into practice.” (See no. 268, questions 19 & 20)

Massilion

XXVI

“Spiritism should in itself be a defense against the spirit of discord and dissention, but throughout time this spirit has brandished its torch over humankind because it envies the fortune that peace and unity provide. Spiritists! It can infiltrate your meetings, and you must have no doubt that it will try to sow enmity in them. It will be powerless, however, against those who are animated by true charity. Therefore, be on guard and constantly watch over the door of your heart as well as your meetings so that this enemy may not gain entrance.

“If your efforts are powerless against those about you, it will nonetheless always depend on you yourselves not to allow

them access to your soul. If dissention stirs in your midst, it can only have come from evil spirits, for those who have risen to the highest degree of the sentiment of duty and comprehension of true Spiritism know how to conduct themselves with civility, showing themselves more patient, noble and understanding. Good spirits may sometimes allow such struggles so that good and evil sentiments may express themselves in order to separate the wheat from the tares. They will always be on the side of the most humble and truly charitable.”

Vincent de Paul

XXVII

“Mercilessly repel all spirits who want to provide exclusive advice, and who foment division and isolation. They are nearly always vain and mediocre spirits, who try to impose themselves on weak and credulous individuals, heaping exaggerated praise upon them in order to bewitch them and keep them under their control. They are usually spirits who are starved for power, who were political or private tyrants when they were living, and who want to continue tyrannizing other victims after death. In general, distrust communications that display a mystical and odd character or that prescribe bizarre ceremonies and practices. There are always legitimate grounds for suspicion in such cases.

“On the other hand, remember that whenever truth is to be revealed to humankind, it is communicated almost simultaneously to all serious groups that are attended by serious mediums, and not to this or that medium in particular, to the exclusion of the others. None can be perfect mediums if they are obsessed, and obsession is obvious whenever mediums are able to receive communications only from one particular spirit, no matter how high up the spirit tries to place itself. Consequently, all groups (and all mediums) that believe they are privileged with communications that only

they themselves can receive, and which, on the other hand, adhere to practices of a superstitious nature, unequivocally find themselves under an obvious obsession, especially when the dominating spirit flatters itself with a name that all Spiritists and other incarnates should honor and respect, and would not consider profaning under any circumstance.

“It is uncontestable that by submitting all information and communication from spirits to the cauldron of reason and logic, it will be easy to expose absurdity and error. One medium may be bewitched, and one group may be deceived, but the strict verification of other groups, the knowledge acquired and the high moral authority of the directors, together with the communications that the principal mediums receive bearing the stamp of logic and authenticity of the most highly evolved spirits, will bring quick justice to lying and cunning dictations that come from a crowd of lying and malevolent spirits.”

Erastus (Disciple of St. Paul)

One of the distinctive characteristics of spirits who want to impose themselves and make their bizarre and theoretical ideas accepted is pretension, as if they are the only ones who know about them to the exclusion of everyone else. Their tactic is to avoid discussion. When they see that they are being fought victoriously by the irresistible arguments of logic, they disdainfully refuse to respond and order their mediums to avoid Spiritist centers where their ideas are not accepted. This isolation is most fatal to mediums, because they defenselessly endure the game of these obsessor spirits, who frequently lead them like the blind along the most noxious paths.

XXVIII

“False prophets do not exist only among incarnates. A very large number of them may also be found among proud spirits

who, under false appearances of love and charity, sow disunion and hinder the work of humankind's emancipation by spreading their absurd theories that they make mediums accept. In order to better captivate those whom they want to deceive, and in order to give more weight to their theories, they unscrupulously adorn themselves with names that people speak with respect, such as justly venerated saints and the names of Jesus, Mary and even God.

"They are the ones who sow the leaven of discord among groups and drive them to isolate themselves from one another and regard one another with jealousy. This is enough to unmask them because by acting like that they provide a formal denial of who they claim to be. People would have to be blind, therefore, to allow themselves to be caught in such an obvious trap.

"However, there are many other ways to recognize them. Spirits of the order to which they say they belong must not only be extremely good, but also eminently logical and rational. So then, pass their theories through the strainer of reason and common sense, and you will see what remains of them. Every time a spirit suggests a remedy for the ills of humankind or a means of attaining its transformation through utopian, impractical, puerile and ridiculous measures, when it formulates theories that contradict the most ordinary notions of science, then it cannot be any more than an ignorant and deceiving spirit.

"On the other hand, remember that if the truth is not always discerned by individuals, it always is by the common sense of the masses, which is also a criterion. If two principles contradict each other, you have a measure for their intrinsic value by seeing which of them will meet with the most resonance and sympathy. Would it then be logical to accept a doctrine, whose number of supporters is decreasing, to be truer than the other, whose number is increasing? God wills that the truth reach everybody, and so does

not confine it within a restrictive circle. God enables it to appear at different points so that the light may shine everywhere alongside the darkness.

Erastus

The best guarantee that a principle is an expression of truth is in the fact that it is being taught by several spirits through mediums unknown to one another and in several places; also, that it is confirmed by reason and sanctioned by the largest number of adherents. Only truth can provide roots for a doctrine. An erroneous theory can very well win a few followers, but since it lacks the primary condition of vitality, it will only enjoy an ephemeral existence. Thus, there is no reason for disquietude. It will destroy itself through its own errors and will inevitably fall before the powerful weapon of logic.

Apocryphal Communications

Sometimes there are communications that are so absurd, although signed by highly respectable names, that the most ordinary common sense exposes their falsity. In others, the error, disguised by being mixed in with correct principles, can mislead and prevent its detection at first sight. However, they do not hold up under serious examination. Following are a few examples.

XXIX

“The perpetual and incessant creation of worlds is for God a kind of perpetual pleasure in seeing their rays become more and more luminous in happiness. For God, there is neither number nor time; thus, hundreds or millions are neither more nor less to God. God is a father, whose joy is composed of the collective joy of all his children. At each second of creation, God sees a new joy founded upon the universal joy. There is neither cessation nor suspension in

this perpetual movement, this great continuous joy that fertilizes both heaven and earth. You only know a small fraction of what there is to know about the earth, and you have brothers³⁹ who live on planes that humans have not yet reached. Of what significance are the terrible heat and mortal cold that paralyze the efforts of the most audacious? Do you believe you have reached the limits of your world when you cannot advance any farther with your precarious resources? Can you precisely measure your planet? Do not believe it. There are more unknown regions than known ones on your planet. However, since it is futile to continue propagating your evil institutions and all your imperfect laws, actions and ways of life, there is a limit which keeps you here or there, and which restrains you until you can bear the good seed that your free will shall produce. No, you do not know the world you call Earth. In your existence, you shall see a big beginning as proof of this communication; hence, the hour will sound in which there will be another discovery beyond the last that was made. You will see the circle of your known earth broaden, and when the press sings that hosanna in every language, you, poor children, who love God and seek the divine path, you will know about it even before those who will give their name to the new land.”

Vincent de Paul

From the style point of view, this communication does not hold up under criticism. The inaccuracies, the redundancies and the faulty expressions jump out at the eyes of whoever is even a little bit literate. Nevertheless, all that would prove nothing against the name by which it is signed, since such imperfections could have resulted from the insufficiency of the medium, as we have shown. What would pertain to the spirit would be the idea; thus, when it states that on our planet there are more unknown than known regions, that a new continent will be discovered, such is, for a supposedly high order spirit, proof of the

³⁹ We have opted not to employ inclusive language in these apocryphal messages – Tr.

most profound ignorance. There is no doubt that besides the frozen regions a few unknown corners of the earth may yet be discovered, but stating that these lands are peopled and that God has hidden them from other humans so that they will not take their evil institutions there is to display a great deal of confidence in the blindness of those who receive similar absurdities.

XXX

My children, our material world and the spirit world, about which you still know so very little, are like the two plates of an eternal weighing-scale. Until now, our religions, our laws, our customs and our passions have caused the plate of evil on the scales to drop and the good one to rise since we have seen evil reign supreme on earth. Down through the centuries it has always been the same lamentation from human lips, and the fatal conclusion is that God is unjust. There are even those who go so far as to deny that he even exists. You see everything here and nothing there. You see the superfluous that displaces need, the gold that shines with the clay – the most shocking contrasts that prove your dual nature. Where does this come from? Whose fault is it? That is what you must calmly and impartially try to answer. Whenever a good remedy is sincerely sought after, people find it. In spite of this domination of evil over good through your own fault, why don't you see everything else steadily following the line traced out by God? Do you see the seasons getting out of order? The heat and cold inconsiderately clashing with each other? The light of the sun forgetting to light the earth? The earth forgetting the seeds which sowers have planted there? Have you seen an end to the thousand continual miracles that occur before your eyes, from the germination of the herb to the birth of the child, a future human being?

“However, if everything fine is on God's side, everything evil is on humankind's side. What will remedy this? It is very simple:

draw close to God. Love one another; join with one another; understand one another, and calmly follow the road whose signposts may be perceived with the eyes of faith and conscience.”

Vincent de Paul

This communication was received in the same circle as the previous one – but what a difference! – not only because of the ideas but also because of the style. Everything in it is just, profound and sensible, and St. Vincent de Paul certainly would not disavow it. Thus, we may safely attribute it to him.

XXXI

“March forward, children; close up your ranks! That means unity will make you strong. You who work on the foundation of the grand edifice, watch and labor always to consolidate your base, and you will then be able to build it high, really high! There is great progress all over our globe; there are an innumerable number of converts gathering under our banner. Many skeptics and even the staunchest disbelievers are also drawing near.

March forward, children; march with an uplifted heart, full of faith. The course you are following is beautiful; do not slow down. Always follow a straight line, serving as guides for those behind you. They shall be happy, very happy!

“March forward, children! You do not need the strength of bayonets to uphold your cause – you only need faith. Conviction, fraternity and unity are your weapons. With them you are strong, more powerful than all the potentates of the universe combined, in spite of their armies, their fleets, their cannons and their bullets!

“You, who fight for the liberty of the people and the regeneration of the great human family, march forward, children; take courage and persevere. God will help you. Good night. I shall see you later.

Napoleon

During his life, Napoleon was a grave and serious man like few others. Everyone knew about his brief and concise style. Would he have degenerated after death by becoming verbose and frilly? This communication might have come from some soldier calling himself Napoleon.

XXXII

“No, one cannot change one’s religion when one does not have a religion that at the same time satisfies common sense and intelligence, and which above all can provide consolation to humankind in the present. No, one cannot change one’s religion; instead, one falls from ineptitude and domination into wisdom and liberty. Forward then, our little army! Forward and do not fear the enemies’ bullets, those that can kill you have not yet been molded – if, from the bottom of your heart, you are always on the path of the Lord, that is, if you will always peacefully and victoriously fight for your well-being and freedom.”

Vincent de Paul

Who could possibly recognize St. Vincent de Paul by this language, by these thoughts so disordered and lacking in meaning? What do these words mean: “No, one cannot change one’s religion; instead one falls from ineptitude and domination into wisdom and liberty”? With its “bullets that have not yet been molded” we highly suspect that this is the same spirit who signed the communication above with the name *Napoleon*.

XXXIII

“Children of my faith, Christians of my doctrine, forgotten under the self-seeking waves of the materialists’ philosophy, follow me along the Judean pathway, follow the passion of my life, contemplate now my enemies, behold my sufferings, my torments and the blood I shed for my faith.

“Spiritualist children of my new doctrine, you are ready to support, to confront the waves of adversity, the sarcasms of your enemies. Faith advances without ceasing; follow your star, which will lead you along the pathway of eternal happiness as the star led the kings of the east to the manger. Whoever your adversaries may be, whatever may be your punishments and the tears that fall onto this sphere of exile, take heart and persuade yourselves that the joy which will inundate you in the spirit world will be way above the torments of your temporary earthly existence.

“The valley of tears is a valley that must disappear in order to give way to the shining dwelling place of joy, fraternity and unity, to which you shall arrive through your obedience to the holy revelation. My dear brothers, life on this terrestrial sphere is entirely preparatory and cannot last longer than what is necessary to become well-prepared for that life that shall never pass away. Love one another; love one another as I have loved you, brothers! I bless you. In heaven I wait for you.”

Jesus

“From these shining and luminous regions, which human thought can hardly reach, the echo of your words and my words has come to touch my heart.

“Oh! How inundated with joy I feel at beholding you, the continuers of my doctrine. No, nothing comes close to the testimony of your good thoughts! My children, you have seen the regenerative idea, which I long ago cast over the world, persecuted and detained for a moment under the pressure of tyrants, but which now proceeds without obstacles to enlighten the paths of humankind, which had been immersed in darkness for so long.

“Every great and disinterested sacrifice, my children, sooner or later bears its fruits. My martyrdom has proven it; my blood

shed for my doctrine shall save humankind and erase the wrongs of great culprits!

“Blessed are you, who today have taken your place in the regenerated family! Press on with courage, my children!”

Jesus

Obviously, there is nothing evil in these two communications, but did Christ ever use such pretentious, emphatic and puffed-up language? If both are compared with what we inserted earlier, and which was signed with the same name, one will see which one bears the stamp of authenticity.

All these apocryphal communications were received in the same circle. One may observe in the style an air of familiarity, turns of similar phrases, and the frequent repetition of the same expressions, as for example: “Go forward, go forward, my children”, etc., from which we may conclude that the same spirit dictated all of them under different names. In this circle, which is very conscientious but a bit too credulous, no one makes evocations or asks questions; they all wait for spontaneous communications. Hence, we can see that this method is no guarantee as to identity. With questions that were both demanding and logically arranged, it would have been easy to put this spirit in its place. However, it knew there was nothing to fear, since no one asked it any questions but accepted everything it said without scrutiny and with closed eyes. (See no. 269)

XXXIV

“How beautiful nature is! How prudent Providence is in its foresight! But your blindness, your human passions keep you from acquiring patience in God’s prudence and goodness. You whine at the least bit of a problem, at the least delay in your plans. So, impatient vacillators, be assured that nothing happens without a foreseen reason, and without premeditation for the benefit of all people. O men of hypocritical fear, the reason for such delays is

the need to reduce to nothing your predictions of bad years for your harvests.

God inspires persons with concern about the future in order to lead them to foresight. See how great your resources are for resolving your purposefully aroused fears, which hide the most avid intentions, rather than providing prudence, inspired with a sense of human kindness in favor of the poor. See the relationships between nations that will result; see how many transactions must be concluded, how many resources will contribute to remedy your fears! For, as you know, everything is linked together – great and small will come to join in the work.

Then, don't you see in this movement a source of certain well-being for the hardest working class in the states, that truly interesting class that you, the omnipotent ones of the earth, regard as people you can shape as you wish, and who have been created for your own satisfaction?

Well, what happens after all that going and coming from one extreme to the other? It just so happens that once we have been well provided for, the weather often changes. The sun, obeying the designs of its Creator, ripens your harvest in only a few days. God places abundance where your greed thinks only of scarcity, and in spite of you, the little people will be able to live. Without your even suspecting it, you have been unwittingly the cause of an era of abundance.

Nonetheless, it also just so happens – God sometimes permits it – that evil ones succeed in their avaricious projects. However, then it is a teaching that God wants to give everybody. It is human foresight that he wants to stimulate. It is the infinite order that reigns in nature, and which people must imitate in order to meet events with courage so that they can bear them with resignation.

As for those who calculatedly take advantage of disasters, believe me, they shall be punished. God wants all beings to

live. People should not tamper with necessity nor traffic in the superfluous. Just in divine benefits, great in divine clemency, too good before our ingratitude, God's designs are impenetrable.

Bossuet. Alfred de Marignac

This communication assuredly contains nothing bad. It contains the same profound philosophical ideas and very prudent advice which, as to identity, could deceive persons who are not well versed in literature. The medium who received it submitted it to examination by the Paris Spiritist Society, which unanimously declared that it could not be from Bossuet. When asked about it, St. Louis responded:

"This communication is good in itself, but do not believe that Bossuet dictated it. A spirit wrote it, perhaps somewhat under his inspiration, and signed the name of the great bishop so that it would be readily accepted; however, by its language you must recognize the substitution. It is from the spirit whose name is placed after that of Bossuet."

When asked about its motive for doing this, the spirit declared:

"I had the desire to write something in order to be remembered by posterity. Seeing that I was weak, I wanted to join myself to the prestige of a great name."

"But didn't you think that we would realize that it wasn't from Bossuet?"

"Who knows what could have actually happened? You could have been taken in. Others who were less enlightened would have accepted it."

Actually, the ease with which some individuals accept everything that comes from the invisible world under the cover of a great name is what encourages deceptive spirits. We must set all our attention on unmasking the ploys of such spirits, but we can only do so with the help of experience acquired through serious study. That is why we constantly repeat: Study before practicing, for that is the only way you will not acquire experience at your own expense.



Spiritist Glossary

Agenerate (from the Greek, *privative, a*, and *géiné, géinomaï*, to engender; non-engendered). A variety of tangible apparitions. The state of a certain spirit, who can momentarily take on the form of a living person to the point of producing a complete illusion.

Errant state – The situation of errant spirits, that is, not incarnate, during the intervals between their corporeal existences.

Medianimic – Belonging to the special faculty of mediums. *The mediumistic faculty.*

Medianimity – The faculty of mediums. Synonymous with *mediumship*. These words are often employed interchangeably; if one wants to make a distinction, one may say that *mediumship* has a more general meaning and *medianimity* a more restricted one: someone has the gift of *mediumship*. *Mechanical medianimity.*

Medium – (from the Latin, *medium*, middle, intermediary). A person who can serve as an intermediary between spirits and incarnates.

Mediumat – The providential mission of mediums. This word has been coined by the Spirits. (See chapter XXXI, communication XII).

Mediumship – (See Medianimity).

Perispirit – (from the Greek, *péri*, around). The semi-material envelope of the spirit. Among incarnates it serves as the tie or intermediary between the spirit and matter. Among errant spirits it comprises the spirit's fluidic body.

Pneumatography – (from the Greek, *pneuma*, air, breath, wind, spirit, and *graphô*, write). Direct writing by spirits without using the medium's hand.

Pneumatophony – (from the Greek, *pneuma*, and *phoné*, sound or voice). The voice of spirits, the oral communication of spirits without using the voice of a medium.

Psychographer – (from the Greek, *psukê*, butterfly, soul, and *graphô*, I write). The person who psychographs; a writing medium.

Psychography – The writing by spirits using the medium's hand.

Psychophony – Communication by spirits through the voice of a speaking medium.

Rapper – A quality of certain spirits. Rapping spirits are those who reveal their presence through raps and noises of various kinds.

Reincarnation – The return of the spirit to the bodily life; the plurality of existences.

Sematology – (from the Greek *semâ*, sign and *logos*, word). Sign language. The communication by spirits through the movement of inert objects.

Spirit – In the specialized meaning of the Spiritist Doctrine: *Spirits are the intelligent beings of creation, who populate the universe beyond the material world, and who comprise the invisible world.* They are not separate, specially created beings, but the very souls of people who have lived on the earth or on other spheres, and who have left their corporeal envelope behind.

Spiritism – Doctrine founded upon the belief in the existence of spirits and their manifestations.

Spiritist – Whatever is related to Spiritism; a follower of Spiritism; someone who believes in Spirit manifestations. *A good, a bad Spiritist; the Spiritist Doctrine.*

Spiritualism – Used in the opposite sense as materialism; the belief in the existence of a spiritual and immaterial soul. *Spiritualism is the basis for all religions.*

Spiritualist – That which is related to spiritualism; a follower of spiritualism. Whoever wants to believe that we do not consist only of matter is a *spiritualist*, which absolutely does not imply a belief in spirit manifestations. Every *Spiritist* is necessarily a *spiritualist*, but one can be a *spiritualist* without being a *Spiritist*. The *materialist* is neither. One may say: *the spiritualist philosophy*; a work written using *spiritualist* ideas; Spirit *manifestations* are produced by the action of spirits upon matter; *Spiritist* morality derives from the teaching of the Spirits. There are *spiritualists* who scoff at *Spiritist* beliefs. In such cases, replacing the word *spiritualist* with the word *Spiritist* would produce obvious confusion.

Stereotype - (from the Greek, *stéréos*, solid). Quality of tangible apparitions.

Typter - (from the Greek, *tuptô*, I strike). The quality of mediums skillful at communications through typology. *A typological medium.*

Typtology – Communication by means of raps; a mode of spirit communication. *Alphabetical typtology.*

EXPLANATORY NOTE¹

Today they believe and their faith is unshakable, because it is based on evidence and demonstration, and because it satisfies reason. [...] Such is the faith of Spiritists, and the proof of their strength is that they endeavor to make themselves better, to control their evil inclinations and to put into practice Christ's maxims, regarding all humans as brothers and sisters regardless of race, caste, or sect, forgiving their enemies and repaying evil with good in accordance with the divine model. (KARDEC, Allan. *Revue Spirite*, 1868).

A strictly rational and scientific study of facts that revealed the communication of human beings with spirits, accomplished by Allan Kardec, resulted in the codification of the Spiritist Doctrine, which was systematized according to scientific, philosophical and religious aspects.

Beginning in 1854 and lasting until his death in 1869, Kardec's endeavor was comprised of five basic works: *The Spirits' Book* (1857), *The Mediums' Book* (1861), *The Gospel according to Spiritism* (1864), *Heaven and Hell* (1865) and *Genesis* (1868), in addition to the book *What is Spiritism* (1859) and a series of booklets and 136 editions of *Revue Spirite* (Jan. 1858 – Apr. 1869). After his death, the book *Posthumous Works* was compiled (1890).

A meticulous and unrestrained study of these works will enable us to extract a number of basic conclusions: a) all

¹ **Publisher's note:** This "Explanatory Note," published due to an agreement with the Brazilian Federal Department of Justice (Ministério Público Federal), is intended to demonstrate the absence of any discrimination or prejudice in certain passages of the works of Allan Kardec, which are all characterized by upholding the principles of Christian fraternity and solidarity contained in the Spiritist Doctrine.

human beings are immortal spirits created by God under equal conditions, subject to the same natural laws of progress that gradually lead all to perfection; b) progress occurs by means of successive experiences in innumerable reincarnations necessarily encompassing all social classes, which is the only way the spirit can accumulate the learning experience needed for its development; c) in the period between reincarnations the spirit lives in the spirit world and can communicate with humans; d) progress obeys the moral laws taught and lived by Jesus, our guide and model, who is the reference for all people who desire to evolve consciously and intentionally.

At several points in his work, the Codifier refers to spirits who have incarnated in uneducated and primitive tribes that existed at the time in a few regions of the planet, and that, in contact with other segments of civilization, were undergoing innumerable transformations – many of which were obviously beneficial for their members – resulting from the general progress to which all ethnicities are subject, regardless of the color of their skin.

In Kardec's time the phrenological ideas of Gall and the physiognomic ideas of Lavater were accepted by eminent scientists. Also, the publication in 1859 – two years after the release of *The Spirits' Book* – of Charles Darwin's book *The Evolution of Species*, containing the natural misconceptions and misunderstandings that every new science entails, caused enormous excitement in the means of communication within the scholarly community and the general population. Furthermore, the belief that facial traits reveal the character of an individual is ancient and implies that there is an apparent relationship between one's physical and moral bearing.

The Codifier did not agree with many aspects presented by these so-called sciences. Thus, he tried to appraise the conclusions of such eminent scholars in the light of the Spirits'

revelation, bringing to the discussion the spiritual element as the decisive factor in resolving the issues regarding human diversity and inequality.

In the principles of the Spiritist Doctrine, Kardec found explanations that point to wise and supreme laws, which is why he affirmed that Spiritism enables "... the solving of thousands of historical, archeological, anthropological, theological, psychological, moral, social, etc. problems" (*Revue Spirite*, 1862). In fact, the universal laws of love, charity, immortality of the soul, reincarnation and evolution comprise new parameters for understanding the development of human groups in the many regions of the planet.

This understanding of the Divine Laws allowed Kardec to state:

The body proceeds from the body, but the spirit does not proceed from the spirit. There is no other link than blood kinship among descendants. (*The Spirits' Book*, no. 207)

[...] Spiritism, restoring to the spirit its true role in creation by demonstrating the superiority of the mind over matter, naturally puts an end to all the established distinctions among human beings according to bodily and worldly advantages, upon which pride alone founded castes and the stupid prejudices of color. (*Revue Spirite*, 1861)

The privileges of race have their origin in the abstraction that humans normally make of the spiritual principle by taking only the outward physical being into consideration. From the constitutional strength or weakness of some, the difference in color of others, the birth into wealth or poverty, and noble or plebian blood kinship, they concluded that there is a natural superiority or inferiority. Upon such data they based their social laws and race privileges. From this limited point of view – for they take only the physical life into consideration – certain classes seem to belong –

and really do belong – to different races. However, if they would take their point of view from the spiritual being, the essential and progressive being, i.e. the spirit, preexistent to and surviving everything and whose body is nothing more than a temporary envelope that varies like clothing in shape and color; moreover, if from the study of spirit beings proves that such beings are of an identical nature and origin, that their destiny is the same and that all take their departure from the same point and tend toward the same objective; that corporeal life is nothing more than one incident, one of the phases in the life of the spirit, and necessary for its intellectual and moral advancement; that in light of this advancement the spirit may successively clothe itself in many different envelopes, be born into different situations, then they would arrive at the crucial consequence of equality of nature, and from there, the equality of social rights for all human individuals and the abolition of race privileges. This is what Spiritism teaches. You who deny the existence of the spirit in order to consider only the corporeal individual, the continuation of the intelligent being in order to look only at the present life, you deny the sole principle upon which the equality of rights that you demand for yourselves and your fellow beings is rightly founded. (*Revue Spirite*, 1867)

With reincarnation, race and caste prejudices collapse, since the same spirit can be reborn rich or poor, great lord or proletarian, boss or subordinate, free or slave, male or female. Of all the arguments against the injustice of servitude and slavery, against the subjugation of women to the law of the mightiest, there are none that logically prevail over the material fact of reincarnation. Therefore, if reincarnation rests upon a law of nature – the principle of universal fraternity – it also rests upon the law of the equality of social rights and, consequently, of liberty. (Genesis, chap. I, no. 36. See also *Revue Spirite*, 1867)

At the time, Kardec knew only what various authors wrote about African primitives, who were always reduced to nearly complete animality when they were not mercilessly enslaved.

It was based on this “scientific” information of the time that, using other words, the Codifier repeated what European scholars described upon returning from their journeys to Black Africa. However, it was crucial that he address the issue of racial prejudice:

We labor to give faith to those who believe in nothing; to spread a belief that encourages them to behave better toward one another, which teaches them to forgive their enemies and to regard each other as brothers and sisters without distinction of race, caste, sect, color or political or religious opinion; in other words, a belief that gives birth to the true sentiment of charity, fraternity and social duty. (*Revue Spirite*, Jan. 1863)

Moral persons are kind, humane and benevolent toward all regardless of race or creed, because they regard all people as their brothers and sisters. (*The Gospel according to Spiritism*, chap. XVII, no. 3)

It is also important to understand that the texts published by Kardec in *Revue Spirite* were intended to submit to general scrutiny the communications received from spirits, as well as to compare their teachings with the theories and systems of thought in force at the time. In a footnote in chapter XI, number 43 of the book *Genesis*, the Codifier explains this methodology:

In the January 1862 issue of *Revue Spirite*, when we published an article on the *interpretation of the doctrine of the fallen angels*, we presented this theory as a hypothesis, with no other authority than that of a debatable personal opinion, because, at the time, we lacked elements sufficiently complete for an absolute assertion.

We put it out as a trial essay, seeking to elicit examination of the issue, fully determined to abandon it or modify it if need be. Today, however, this theory has endured the test of universal control. It has not only been accepted by the majority of Spiritists as the most rational and most in agreement with God's justice, but has also been confirmed by most of the instructions given by the Spirits on the subject. The same applies to the origin of the Adamic race. (*Genesis*, chap. XI, no. 43)

Finally, one must realize that the principal scope of the Spiritist Doctrine lies in the moral perfection process of the human being, which is the reason why scientific and/or philosophical investigation and examination occupy a secondary, although important, position, considering their provisory character resulting from overall progress and improvement. In this sense the Codifier's warning is justified:

It is true that this and other issues lie outside the moral point of view, which is the essential goal of Spiritism. Hence, it would be a mistake to make them the object of constant preoccupation. Moreover, with respect to the principle of things, we know that since spirits do not know everything, they speak only of what they know or what they think they know. However, since there are persons who might draw from the divergence of these theories an induction against the unity of Spiritism precisely because they have been formulated by the Spirits, it is useful to be able to compare the reasons for and against, in the interest of the Doctrine itself, and to support on the basis of the majority the judgment that may be made as to the worth of certain communications. (*Revue Spirite*, 1862)

In light of the above considerations, one must conclude that in the Spiritist Doctrine absolute respect is rendered to human diversity, and it is the Spiritist's responsibility to cooperate in the progress of humankind by practicing charity in its most far-reaching sense ("benevolence toward all, indulgence for others' imperfections and the forgiveness of offenses), just as Jesus, our Guide and Model, taught, without prejudices of any kind as to color, ethnicity, gender, creed or economic, social or moral standing.

The Publisher

