

## SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES.

"Perhaps you never heard of Sothern's spiritual experience," writes the old lady. "Well, one Saturday evening—by the way, we did not play on Saturday evenings then—we took it into our heads to have some amusement of our own, and I proposed to go to the spirit knockers. Sothern caught at the idea eagerly, and we started off. Not knowing the street in which they resided, we were obliged to apply at every house for two or three blocks, Sothern good-naturedly assuming the role of an unsophisticated countryman.

"At last, however, we found the spot, and fortunately I was recognized by the inmates of the house. A circle had already been formed around the table, and we were invited to take seats and join them. Sothern pretended to be intensely excited—I never saw him more so. He scrutinized all the surroundings closely, asked a great many questions, and went home apparently quite serious and bewildered. He was particularly amused by the husband of the medium, who, opening the window in the apartment at 10 o'clock, declared with a solemn air that the spirits had departed—that they couldn't stay any longer. He got up and went to the window to observe where they had gone, and you never saw so surprised a man.

"The next evening Gustavus V. Brooke, the tragedian, who was very intimate with Mr. Sothern, came to the house, and making up a large party we repeated our visit to the rappers. Brooke was likewise very much affected by what he saw, and shed tears, confessing that the spiritualists had described home scenes and incidents that were unknown to anybody but himself. When we returned from the place that night, Sothern remarked: 'Now, I propose to devote my life to finding out what this infernal mystery is. I believe it's a humbug, and I'll know it and that right soon. I observe that the man always opens the window to let the spirits out about the same time every evening—I think I can make them stay. You wait and see!'

"A fortnight or more passed away, during which we had seances at my own house, for the purpose of discovering, if possible, how the raps were produced. One evening the medium suddenly turned round, and exclaiming that she was tired, opened the window as usual and remarked that the spirits had gone. 'Stop!' said Mr. Sothern, 'they have not gone. They are still present, and I hear them at this moment distinctly.' Sure enough, the raps were immediately reproduced in a louder and more emphatic manner than we had ever heard them before. 'I believe I can do even better,' said Sothern,

without cracking a smile. 'We'll have the spirit rap out "Yankee Doodle," and "God Save the Queen."'

"The poor medium almost fainted. You never saw any one so much cut up. Thereupon Sothern proceeded to give intelligent answers to all the questions propounded, and mystified us more completely than we had been before. When he finished he turned to the company and said: 'Now you see for yourselves—this woman is an ar-rant humbug.' From that time on, he produced the most wonderful effects. I don't know how he did it, but perhaps he will tell you himself.

"I remember that one day at dinner everything on the table commenced dancing, until at last the table itself moved off around the room in a genuine can-can. On another occasion, Mr. Tom Hind, the husband of Mrs. Knight, who has lately been playing with John Brougham, said: 'My dear sir, I trust you don't expect me to believe any of this nonsense.' 'I don't care whether you do or not,' said Mr. Sothern, 'I only know there it is.' They then sat down, and in less than half an hour Hind was sobbing bitterly before everybody, and fancying that the spirit of his father, and that of his dead brother, were answering his questions. He said he even felt them clasp his hands and knees, and smooth his hair. Among other things, he asked his father if he was unhappy on account of an estrangement which existed between himself and a living brother. The spirit told him 'Yes,' and recommended a reconciliation, which Hind then and there promised, although it was a brother who had injured him, and the concession should have come from that side of the house.

"Another day Joe Jefferson came into the place and said: 'You may talk to me for a year, but can't make me believe that there is anything spiritual about this thing.' The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the chair on which he was sitting commenced to move. Joe sat there, however, and was carried back and forth with astonishment depicted on every feature. I think he will remember that incident to his dying day.

"Sothern was always full of his practical jokes at that time, just as he is now. One night a very respectable old Irish woman, who did our washing, came into the room.

"'Good evening, Mrs. McCarthy,' said he. 'I hope you are very well! But who in the world is that with you?'

"'Wid me!' said the astonished woman, 'why nobody, sure.'"

"'Yes, there is a man behind you; and it's your husband.'"

"'Me husband! Shure, why he's dead, sir, close on to twinty year.'"