

A Convert Through Spiritualism.

The story of each "pilgrim's progress," from that special "house upon the sand," wherein he happened to be born, or which he had constructed for himself, towards the House, built by the Living God upon a rock, has its own individual interest, not only as a human document, but even more, as being a record of the dealings of God with that particular soul.

Yet there has been a certain underlying similarity, beneath wide differences of character and circumstances, in most accounts of the conversion of educated English men and women, since the time of the Oxford movement, arising from the fact that such converts have been, for the most part, earnest and devout Anglicans of one type or another. Amongst such, with whatever divergencies and idiosyncrasies, a common if vague idea of the existence of a right road, could it but be discovered, has been already present to their minds, and, as many sought it simultaneously, they found cheer and comfort by the way. But the brief history now to be related, is that of one who groped on, alone beneath the stars, through strange untrodden paths, out of the beaten track, yet, who was wonderfully led into God's Church; now, many years ago.

For me, as for one of old, the *piet* had gone forth. "Behold I take from thee the desire of thy eyes with a stroke," and I was alone, and desolate. My short marriage had been perfect in its love and sympathy, and life without my husband seemed unendurable, but a little child was left me, and for his sake I resisted the longing to turn my face to the wall and die.

I had not ceased to believe in "God the Father Almighty," nor in "the life everlasting;" but these two articles may be said to have comprised my creed. Everything else has become to me more or less shadowy and uncertain.

I had been brought up in the Church of England, but I had never felt any loyalty or allegiance to her, or attraction towards any section of Anglican opinion, and all assumption of authority by either party roused in me indignation and rebellion. I felt it illogical, that religious submission should be demanded by any Protestant institution, the fundamental basis of Protestantism being the right of private judgment in matters of faith. I had always been conscious of a sort of distant awe and reverence for the great Church of Rome, though I knew nothing of her doctrines; moreover, her poetry and art appealed to my love of the beautiful, but I shrank from her claim to authority, having an intense dread of dogmatism and domination, and regarding truth entirely from a subjective point of view.

In miracles, visions, and apparitions, whether of angels, or of the departed, I had sorrowfully ceased to believe, because it appeared to me undoubted, that God being always the same God, and His laws the same and changeless, that which had happened could happen again, and in all probability would do so, therefore, being accustomed to hear it asserted, or taken for granted, that since Apostolic times the supernatural had ceased to influence this earth, I came to regard Biblical statements of such occurrences as mythical embodiments of some moral or spiritual lesson, and belief in their actuality, as the superstition of simpler ages.

Nevertheless, I was in good faith, and was ready and anxious to follow any gleam of light, at any cost, and, so light was sent me, in what would seem an exceptional manner, although I am by no means a solitary instance of conversion to the Church through what is called "Spiritualism."

The main difference between all that is included under that compre-

hensive title, and the possibilities of communication between the living and the dead, believed in by Catholics, consists, so far as I apprehend the question, chiefly in this, that in what goes by the name of "Spiritualism," a certain conscious initiative is taken on the human side, with direct intent to induce manifestations from beings out of the flesh, whereas all intercourse between the seen and the unseen, in Catholic records, has been, apparently, and certainly so far as the consciousness of the recipient extended, commenced and carried out, solely and entirely, from the invisible world, without his consent or desire. Upon the hypothesis of the unconscious fulfillment of conditions, I will not enter now. The character of such communications has necessarily been much more elevated. I am referring here, to visits from the words spoken by souls in Purgatory, for it is hardly necessary to say, that Divine revelations to the saints, visions and apparitions of our Blessed Lady, or of Angels, stand on a much more exalted footing, and it is not to such that I venture to make allusion. It has always been recognized by Catholic writers, that mysticism has its diabolic side, its natural side, and its Divine side, and that it is not easy to distinguish at once between these; or to be quite sure where one merges into, or is superseded by another. Immense caution has consequently been recommended by theologians, and has been practised by such Catholics as in different ages have been led through strange experiences. Even with the safeguards of true doctrine, and true sacraments, intercourse with the Unseen has always been attended with considerable danger, on account of the subtlety of evil spirits, for, as St. Paul tells us, "Satan transformeth himself into an angel of light."

In the preternaturalism of the present day, outside the Church, there are many shades and grades and degrees and differences, included under the general name of "Spiritualism;" but I think it scarcely possible to overstate, or to exaggerate its many and fearful perils. Such only as have penetrated deeply into its arcana, can form any, even approximate, idea of these. That gifted and clever, but unhappily deluded man, Lawrence Oliphant, speaks most emphatically of the risks incurred by those attending *seances* and this quite apart from other objections that might be urged by a Catholic as to Spiritual or ecclesiastical prohibitions.

To return to my own history. Not very long after my husband died, when I was hungering and thirsting for some sign of his presence, for some evidence that he still lived and loved me, I began to hear Spiritualism discussed, and I read eagerly and listened earnestly, so as to obtain all the information I could. I gathered from sincere and enlightened inquirers into the subject, that with all its deep and absorbing interest, there was always much uncertainty. Mediums, they said, were occasionally deceptive, but were more often themselves deceived; conditions not being as yet well understood, they were not reliable, many factors combining to make up what is called Spiritualism, amongst these, thought-reading, the dual action of the brain, and the unconscious influence of mind upon mind, whether in the circle or at a distance; each and all causing additional complications, and finally, the identity of the Spirits communicating, was not to be easily verified, owing partly to the imperfection of processes, and partly to the audacity and falsehoods of evil spirits, who did not hesitate to take any names, and to pass themselves off as those with whom intercourse was desired. A frame of mind as patient and as passive as might be possible was therefore advised. I was given to understand that the need for a "medium" arose

from the fact that the spirits could only exert their influence and action in and through a magnetic atmosphere, rarer and finer than the palpable one with which we are surrounded, and in which we breathe and live; and that "mediums" were simply persons possessing an unusually large amount of this force, a subtle and etherealized form of electricity, the spirits being able to collect from such persons sufficient power to aid them to come into contact with other human beings not thus gifted.

I became most anxious to find some medium, but had no idea how to accomplish it, when an unexpected way was opened to me under very pleasant and desirable circumstances. A lady I know, told me she would like to introduce me to an old friend of hers, who, together with her daughter was investigating Spiritualism in a very serious and religious manner. Accordingly, the introduction was effected, and the old lady kindly begged me to go and pay them a visit.

Mrs. R. (as I will call her), and her daughter Margaret had been originally Unitarians, as was our mutual friend and introducer, but at the time I made their acquaintance they were Christian dissenters, the Spirits having declared to them the Divinity of our Lord.

I may here add, that Margaret eventually became a Catholic under the same influences which helped me to become one, although some time after my reception, and she has remained a thoroughly good and faithful child of the Church for now more than twelve years, having baptized her mother on her death bed, and instructed many in the Faith. I make a point of mentioning this, because I have seen it stated, not only that Spiritualists seldom become Catholics (which is probably true, though I think many would do so if they could be brought under Catholic influences), but that in the rare instances of apparent conversion, they have always gone back. I can only say that this is distinctly contradicted by facts within my own knowledge.

The *seances* held at Mrs. R.'s house were entirely private, and were attended by no professional medium, but several of the *habitués* possessed considerable magnetic force, which had been developed and increased by these frequent meetings. There was, in particular, a certain Mr. B., a member of the congregation to which my friends belonged, who had very extraordinary powers. He used to fall into a sort of trance, appearing like one dead, pale and livid, and then would suddenly start up, gazing before him into space, with eyes that had in them no speculation, and would begin to speak in voices quite other than and distinct from his own, voices of men, of women, and of children, voices refined and cultured, and voices coarse and rough, he being all the time entirely unconscious of what was being spoken through him. Occasionally a voice would be recognized by friends of the departed individual from whom it professed to emanate, but often the voices were those of strangers, coming for the most part to implore prayers. I afterwards saw this "trance-mediumship," as it is called, in several other instances, especially in that of a German lady, now dead—an interesting person, of sensitive temperament and religious aspiration, who had come out of Calvinism through the teachings of her disembodied friends, and who was gradually learning Catholic doctrine. Her husband used to write down what she said in her trances; much, often, to her own surprise on reading what had been set down.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

For a sluggish and torpid liver, nothing can surpass Ayer's Pills. They contain no calomel, nor any mineral drug, but are composed of the active principles of the best vegetable cathartics, and their use always results in marked benefit to the patient.

The Average Drink Consumption

There is, at first, something very appalling in the record of the drink consumed in large cities. For instance, the statement was lately put forward at the London Mansion House that the city of London drank every year forty-five million gallons of malt liquor, eight million gallons of wine, and four and a half million gallons of spirits. The announcement startled the public until an optimistic mathematician brought a little arithmetic to bear on the figures, and forthwith altered their significance. He found that London had a population of close upon six millions. About two millions of these are children, who, for the purpose of argument, may be classed as taking no alcohol at all. Also, for the purpose of argument, it may be assumed that of the remaining four millions two millions are total abstainers, leaving the drinkers of the city numbered at two millions. This would give an annual average consumption per head of twenty-two and one-half gallons of malt liquor, four gallons of wine, and two and one-fourth gallons of spirit. Twenty-two and one-half gallons a year is almost exactly half a pint a day; four gallons a year would be a very small wine-glass daily; two and one-fourth gallons a year would barely suffice to fill the smallest liquor-glass three hundred and sixty-five times. So that the inquiring statistician reached the conclusion that the terrible drink bill of London resolved itself into the fact that the average Londoner takes one glass of beer with his dinner, and a very small glass of wine after it, and that before he goes to bed he takes the merest toothful of whisky or some other spirit as a nightcap.

Wendell Phillips as a Lecturer.

Wendell Phillips as a lecturer, and apart from his extraordinary power as a convention orator on occasions, was quite the most interesting, the most convincing, the most polished and delightful platform speaker that America has produced. He owed his success to the wit, to the most felicitous and incisive vocabulary, to the most melodious and entrancing voice and to his perfect command of himself and all his resources. He was never slovenly. He always brought his best thought most carefully arranged to his audience, and he never met an audience, even one hostile to him and his opinions that he could not at length subdue to his potent influence. Nothing was left to chance.

He would no more have produced an unfinished lecture than a great artist would have exhibited an unfinished picture. He respected his audience, and the audience always felt this. The sympathy that he gained from it, even when it disagreed with him, was the more remarkable because he never, or rarely ever, improvised. Yet he had such consummate art that he seemed to be improvising, the golden words apparently dropping freshly coined from the brilliant mint of his mind. He was eloquent without a single burst of cheap rhetoric. And of all orators on the platform he was the most convincing and plausible for the hour.—*Charles Dudley Warner in Harper's.*

There is danger in neglecting a cold. Many who have died of consumption dated their troubles from exposure followed by a cold, which settled on their lungs, and in a short time they were beyond the skill of the best physician. Had they used Bickel's Anti-Consumptive Syrup before it was too late, their lives would have been spared. This medicine has no equal for curing coughs, colds and all affections of the throat and lungs.

Look not mournfully into the past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present; it is thine.—*Longfellow.*

That which we are we shall teach, not voluntarily but involuntarily. Thoughts come into our minds by avenues which we never left open, and thoughts go out of our minds through avenues which we never voluntarily opened. Character teaches over our head.