

Ghost-lore may be left to grandmammas. A far more serious affair is Spiritualism, which appears to have a strong hold on many weak, a few strong, and one or two scientific minds. Spiritualism in one aspect may be numbered with reactions against Materialism, though in another aspect it is the grossest of Materialism itself, for what can be more materialistic than table-turning and planchette? It was in the form of table-turning, be it always remembered, that Spiritualism first appeared, and in this case the character of the ultimate development is determined by that of the germ. Table-turning seems to have been first started as a joke: when it became an illusion and a mania, it was conclusively resolved by Professor Owen's experiment into a nervous motion of the hands of the performers. The belief that the spirit world communicates with us through the legs of tables, or even through a planchette, may be safely pronounced lower than the lowest superstition of the savage, and to surrender our minds to it is to do the utmost despite to what is spiritual in ourselves. It might have been supposed that the farcical exposures of Katie King, and of a score of similar impostors, would have been enough to put an end to the epidemic; yet it still widely prevails. Each great eclipse of religious belief in history has been attended by some nemesis of this kind. Sceptical Rome had her Egyptian charlatans, the prototypes of the Sludges, her mysteries of Isis and Serapis, her thaumaturgists, her astrologers. Astrology reigned again in that religious void which followed the decline of the Catholic faith of the Middle Ages, nor, wonderful to say, has it yet ceased to have votaries; not many years ago, at least, it had some amongst the educated classes in London, and maintained a periodical of its own. Mr. Home and his compeers are charlatans of impressive demeanour, who have thoroughly studied the art of fascinating the mind: through the mind they bewitch the senses: and having bewitched the senses they are able to perform very mean and common conjuring tricks without being detected. They are allowed, without demurrer, to arrange conditions for the practice of their legerdemain, to which ex-