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- Is this divulging of all his evil deeds, and the perpetual presence of those who have been the victims of them, a chastisement for the guilty spirit?

"Yes, and a heavier one than you may suppose it to be; but it only lasts until he has expiated his wrong-doing, either as a spirit, or as a man in new corporeal existences."

When we find ourselves in the world of spirits, all our past will be brought into view, and the good the evil that we have done will be equally known. In vain would the malefactor seek to avoid the sight of his victims; their presence, from which he cannot possibly escape, will be for him a punishment and a source of remorse until he has expiated the wrongs he has done them, while the spirit of the upright man will find himself constantly surrounded by kindness and good-will.

Even upon the earth there is no greater torment for the wicked man than the presence of his victims, whom he does his utmost to avoid. What will it be when, the illusions of the passions being dissipated, he comprehends the evil he has done, sees his most secret actions brought to light and his hypocrisy unmasked, and perceives that he cannot hide himself from the sight of those he has wronged? But, while the soul of the wicked is thus a prey to shame, regret, and remorse, that of the righteous enjoys perfect peace.

978. Does not the remembrance of the faults committed by the soul, during its state of imperfection, disturb its happiness even after it has attained to purity?

"No, because it has redeemed its faults, and has come forth victorious from the trials to which it had submitted for that purpose."

979. Does not the prevision of the trials it has still to undergo, in order to complete its purification, excite in the soul a painful apprehension that must lessen its happiness?

"Yes, in the case of a soul who is still soiled by evil, and therefore it can only enjoy perfect happiness when it has become perfectly pure. But for souls who have attained to a certain degree of elevation, the thought of the trials they have still to undergo has in it nothing painful."

The soul, arrived at a certain degree of purification, has already a foretaste of happiness. It is pervaded by a feeling of satisfaction, and is happy in all that it sees, in all that surrounds it. The veil which covers the marvels and mysteries of creation being already partially raised for it, the divine perfections begin to be perceived by it in their splendour.

980. Is the sympathetic link which unites spirits of the same order a source of felicity for them?

"The union of spirits who sympathise in the love of goodness is one of their highest enjoyments, for they have no fear of seeing that union disturbed by selfishness. In worlds altogether spiritual, they form families animated by the same sentiment, and this union constitutes the happiness of those worlds, as in your world you

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group yourselves into categories, and experience pleasure in being thus brought together. The pure and sincere affection felt by elevated spirits, and of which they are the object, is a source of felicity, for there are neither false friends nor hypocrites among them."

Man enjoys the first-fruits of this felicity upon the earth when he meets with those with whom he can enter into cordial and noble union. In a life of greater purity than that of the earth, this felicity becomes ineffable and unbounded, because their inhabitants meet only with sympathetic souls whose affection will not be chilled by selfishness. For love is life; it is selfishness that kills.

981. Is there, as regards the future state of spirits, any difference between him who, during his earthly life, was afraid of death, and him 'who looked forward to it with indifference, or even with joy?

"There may be a very considerable difference between them, though this is often obliterated by the causes which gave rise to that fear or that desire. Those who dread death, and those who desire it, may be moved by very different sentiments, and it is those sentiments which determine the state of a spirit. For instance, it is evident that, if a man only desires death because it will put an end to his tribulations, that desire is, in reality, a sort of murmuring against Providence, and against the trials which lie has to undergo."

982. Is it necessary to make a profession of Spiritism, and to believe in spirit-manifestations, in order to ensure our well-being in the next life?

"If it were so, it would follow that those who do not believe in them, or who have not even had the opportunity of learning anything about them, will be disinherited, which would be absurd. It is right-doing that ensures future well-being; and right-doing is always right-doing, whatever may be the path that leads to it." (165-799.)

Belief in Spiritism aids our self-improvement by clearing our ideas in regard to the future; it hastens the progress and advancement of individuals and of the masses. because it enables us to ascertain 'what we shall some day be, and is at once a beacon and a support. Spiritism teaches us to bear our trials 'with patience and resignation, turns us from the wrong-doing that would delay our future happiness, and contributes to our attainment of that happiness; but it does not follow that we may not attain to that happiness without it.

Temporal Sorrows.

983. Does not a spirit, when expiating its faults in a new existence, undergo material suffering, and, that being the case, is it

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correct to say that, after death, the soul experiences only moral sufferings?

"It is very true that, when the soul is reincarnated, it is made to suffer by the tribulations of corporeal life; but it is only the body that undergoes material suffering.

"You often say, of one who is dead, that he is released from suffering; but this is not always true. As a spirit, he has no more physical sufferings; but, according to the faults he has committed, he may have to bear moral sufferings still more severe, and, in a new existence, he may be still more unhappy. He who has made a selfish use of riches' will have to beg his bread, and will be a prey to all the privations of poverty; the proud will undergo humiliations of every kind; he who has misused his authority, and treated his subordinates with disdain and harshness, will be forced to obey a master still harder than himself. All the tribulations of life are the expiation of faults committed in a preceding existence, when they are not the consequence of faults committed in the present one. When you have quitted your present life, you will understand this. (273, 393, 399.)

"He who, in the earthly life, esteems himself happy because he is able to satisfy his passions, makes few efforts at self-improvement. Such ephemeral happiness is often expiated in the present life, but will certainly be expiated in another existence equally material."

984. Are the troubles of our earthly life always the punishment of faults committed by us in our present lifetime?

"No; we have already told you that they are trials imposed on you by God, or chosen by you in the spirit-state, and before your reincarnation, for the expiation of faults committed by you in a former existence; for no infraction of the laws of God, and especially of the law of justice, ever remains unpunished, and if it be not expiated in the same life, it will certainly be so in another. This is why persons whom you regard as excellent are so often made to suffer; they are stricken in their present life for the faults of their past existences." (393.)

985. When a soul is reincarnated in a world less gross than the earth, is such a reincarnation a reward?

"It is a consequence of its higher degree of purification; for, in proportion as spirits become purified, they reincarnate themselves in worlds of progressively higher degrees, until, having divested

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themselves of all materiality and washed themselves clean of all stains, they enter on the eternal felicity of the fully purified spirits in the presence of God."

In worlds in which the conditions of existence are less material than in ours, the wants of their inhabitants are less gross, and their physical sufferings are less acute. The men of those worlds no longer possess the evil passions which, in lower worlds, make them each other's enemies. Having no motives for hatred or jealousy, they live in peace with one another, because they practise the law of justice, of love, and of charity and they therefore know nothing of the worries and anxieties that come of envy, pride, and selfishness, and that make the torment of our terrestrial existence. (172, 182.)

986. Can a spirit who has progressed in his terrestrial existence be reincarnated in the same world?

"Yes; and if he have not been able to accomplish his mission, he may himself demand to complete it in a new existence; but, in that case, it is no longer an expiation for him." (173.)

987. What becomes of the man who, without doing evil, does nothing to shake off the influence of matter?

"Since he has made no progress towards perfection, he has to begin a new existence of the same nature as the one he has quitted. He remains stationary; and thus prolongs the sufferings of expiation."

988. There are persons whose life flows on in a perfect calm; who, having nothing to do for themselves, are exempt from all cares. Is their good fortune a proof that they have nothing to expiate from any former existence?

"Do you know many such ? If you think you do, you are mistaken. Such lives are often only calm in appearance. A spirit may have chosen such an existence; but he perceives, after quitting it, that it has not served to bring him on, and he then regrets the time he has wasted in idleness. Bear well in mind that a spirit can only acquire knowledge and elevation through activity; that, if he supinely falls asleep, he does not advance. He is like one who (according to your usages) needs to work, but who goes off for a ramble, or goes to bed, with the intention of doing nothing. Bear well in mind, also, that each of you will have to answer for voluntary uselessness on your part, and that such uselessness is always fatal to your future happiness. The sum of that happiness is always exactly proportioned to the sum of the good that you have done; the sum of your unhappiness is always proportioned to the sum of the evil that you have done, and to the number of those whom you have rendered unhappy."

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989. There are persons who, without being Positively wicked, render all about them unhappy by their ill-temper; what is, for them, the consequence of this?

"Such persons are assuredly not good, and they will expiate this wrong by the sight of those whom they have rendered unhappy, which will be a constant reproach for them; and then, in another existence, they will endure all that they have caused to be endured by others."

Expiation and Repentance

990. Does repentance take place in the corporeal state, or in the spiritual state?

"In the spiritual state; but it may also take place in the corporeal state, when you clearly comprehend the difference between good and evil."

991. What is the consequence of repentance in the spiritual state?

"The desire for a new incarnation, in order to become purified. The spirit perceives the imperfections which deprive him of happiness; and he therefore aspires after a new existence in which he will be able to expiate his faults." (332, 975).

992. What is the consequence of repentance in the corporeal state?

"The spirit will advance even in his present life, if he have the time to repair his faults. Whenever your conscience reproaches you, or shows you an imperfection, you may always become better."

993. Are there not men who have only the instinct of evil, and are inaccessible to repentance?

"I have told you that progress must be incessant. He who, in his present life, has only the instinct of evil, will have the instinct of goodness in another one, and it is to effect this end that he is re-born many times. For all must advance, all must reach the goal; but some do this more quickly, others more slowly, according to the energy of their desire. He who has only the instinct of good is already purified, for he may have had that of evil in an anterior existence." (804.)

994. Does the perverted spirit who has not recognised his faults during his life always recognise them after his death?

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"Yes; he always does so, and lie then suffers all the more, for he feels all the evil he has done, or of which he has been the voluntary cause. Nevertheless, repentance is not always immediate. There are spirits who obstinately persist in doing wrong, notwithstanding their sufferings; but, sooner or later, they will see that have taken the wrong road, and repentance will follow this discovery. It is to their enlightenment that the efforts of the higher spirits are directed, and that you may usefully direct your own."

995. Are there spirits who, without being wicked, are indifferent about their own fate?

"There are spirits who do not occupy themselves with anything useful, but are in a state of expectancy. In such cases they suffer in proportion to their inactivity; for all states and conditions must conduce to progress, and with them, this progress is effected by the suffering they experience."

- Have they no desire to shorten their sufferings?

"They have that desire, undoubtedly; but they have not sufficient energy to do what would give them relief. Are there not among you many who prefer to starve rather than to work?"

996. Since spirits see the harm that is done them by their imperfections, how is it that any of them Persist in aggravating their Position, and prolonging their state of inferiority, by doing evil, as spirits, in turning men aside from the right road?

"It is those whose repentance is tardy that act thus. A spirit who repents may afterwards allow himself to be drawn back into the wrong road by other spirits still more backward than himself." (971.)

997. We sometimes find that spirits, who are evidently of very high grade, urged on by pride, revolts against God, persisting in his wrong-doing, and perhaps going even more widely astray, cannot be acted upon by prayer, and can only derive benefit therefrom when a glimmering of repentance shall have shown itself in him." (664.)

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We must not lose sight of the fact that a spirit, after the death of his body, is not suddenly transformed. If his life have been reprehensible, it has been so because he was imperfect. But death does not render him perfect all at once he may in his wrong-doing, his false ideas, his prejudices, until he has become enlightened by study, reflection, and suffering.

998. Is expiation accomplished in the corporeal state, or in the spirit-state?

"Expiation is accomplished during the corporeal existence, through the trials to which the spirit is subjected; and, in the spirit-state, through the moral sufferings belonging to the spirit's state of inferiority."

999. Does sincere repentance during the earthly life suffice to efface the faults of that life, and to restore the wrong-doer to the favour of God?

"Repentance helps forward the amelioration of the spirit, but all wrongdoing has to be expiated."

- That being the case, if a criminal should say, "Since I must necessarily expiate my past, I have no need to repent," what effect would it have upon him?

"If he harden himself in the thought of evil, his expiation will be longer and more painful."

1000. Can we, in the present life, redeem our faults?

"Yes, by making reparation for them. But do not suppose that you can redeem them by a few trifling privations, or by giving, after your death, what you can no longer make use of. God does not value a sterile repentance, a mere smiting of the breast, easily done. The loss of a little finger in doing good to others effaces more wrong doing than any amount of self-torture undergone solely with a view to one's own interest. (726.)

"Evil can only be atoned for by good; and attempts at reparation are valueless if they touch neither a man's pride nor his worldly interests.

"How can his rehabilitation be subserved by the restitution of ill-gotten wealth after his death, when it has become useless to him, and when he has already profited by it ?

"What benefit can he derive from the privation of a few futile enjoyments and of a few superfluities, if the wrong he has done to others is not undone ?

"What, in truth, is the use of his humbling himself before God, if he keeps up his pride before men?" (720, 721.)

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1001. Is there no merit in ensuring the useful employment, after our death, of 'he property possessed by us?

"To say that there is no merit so doing would not be correct; it is always better than doing nothing. But the misfortune is, that he who only gives after his death is often moved rather by selfishness than by generosity; he wishes to have the honour of doing good without its costing him anything. He who imposes privation upon himself during his life reaps a double profit—the merit of his sacrifice, and the pleasure of witnessing the happiness he has caused. But selfishness is apt to whisper, 'Whatever you give away is so much cut off from your own enjoyments;' and as the voice of selfishness is usually more persuasive than that of disinterestedness and charity, it too often leads a man to keep what he has, under pretext of the necessities of his position. He is to be pitied who knows not the pleasure of giving; for he is deprived of one of the purest and sweetest of enjoyments. In subjecting a man to the trial of wealth, so slippery, and so dangerous for his future, God placed within his reach, by way of compensation, the happiness which generosity may procure for him, even in his present life." (814.)

1002. What will become of him who, in the act of dying, acknowledges his wrong-doing, but has not time to make reparation? Does repentance suffice in such a case?

"Repentance will hasten his rehabilitation, but it does not absolve him. Has he not the future, which will never be closed against him?"

Duration of Future Penalties.

1003. Is the duration of the sufferings of the guilty, in the future life, arbitrary or subordinate to a law?

"God never acts from caprice; everything in the universe is ruled by laws which reveal His wisdom and His goodness."

1004. What decides the duration of the sufferings of the guilty?

"The length of time required for his amelioration. A spirit's state of suffering or of happiness being proportioned to the degree of his purification, the duration of his sufferings, as well as their nature, depends on the time it takes him to become better. In proportion as he progresses, and his sentiments become purified, his sufferings diminish and change their nature."

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1005. Does time appear, to the suffering spirit, longer or shorter than in the earthly life?

"It appears longer; sleep does not exist for him. It is only for spirits arrived at a certain degree of purification that time is merged, so to say with infinity." (240)

1006. Could a spirit suffer eternally?

"Undoubtedly, if he remained eternally wicked; that is to say, if he were never to repent nor to amend, he would suffer eternally. But God has not created beings to let them remain for ever a prey to evil; He created them only in a state of simplicity and ignorance, and all of them must progress, in a longer or shorter time, according to the action of their will. The determination to advance may be awakened more or less tardily, as the development of children is more or less precocious; but it will be stimulated, sooner or later, by the irresistible desire of the spirit himself to escape from his state of inferiority, and to be happy. The law which regulates the duration of a spirit's sufferings is, therefore, eminently wise and beneficent, since it makes that duration to depend on his own efforts; he is never deprived of his free-will, but, if he makes a bad use of it, he will have to bear the consequences of his errors."

1007. Are there spirits who never repent?

"There are some whose repentance is delayed for a very long time; but to suppose that they will never improve would be to deny the law of progress, and to assert that the child will never become a man."

1008. Does the duration of a spirit's punishment always depend on his own will, and is it never imposed on him for a given time?

"Yes; punishment may be imposed on him for a fixed time, but God, who wills only the good of His creatures, always welcomes his repentance, and the desire to amend never remains sterile."

1009. According to that, the penalties imposed on spirits are never eternal?

"Interrogate your common sense, your reason, and ask yourself whether an eternal condemnation for a few moments of error would not be the negation of the goodness of God? What, in fact, is the duration of a human life, even though prolonged to a hundred years, in comparison with eternity? ETERNITY! Do you rightly comprehend the word? sufferings, tortures, without end, without hope, for a few faults! Does not your judgement reject

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such an idea? That the ancients should have seen, in the Master of the Universe, a terrible, jealous, vindictive God, is conceivable, for, in their ignorance, they attributed to the Divinity the passions of men; but such is not the God of the Christians, who places love, charity, pity, the forgetfulness of offences, in the foremost rank of virtues, and who could not lack the qualities which He has made it the duty of His creatures to possess. Is it not a contradiction to attribute to Him infinite love and infinite vengeance? You say that God's justice is infinite, transcending the limited understanding of mankind; but justice does not exclude kindness, and God would not be kind if He condemned the greater number of His creatures to horrible and unending punishment. Could He make it obligatory on His children to be just, if His own action towards them did not give them the most perfect standard of justice? And is it not the very sublimity of justice and of kindness to make the duration of punishment to depend on the efforts of the guilty one to amend, and to mete out the appropriate recompense, both for good and for evil, 'to each, according to his works'?"

SAINT AUGUSTINE

"Set yourselves, by every means in your power, to combat and to annihilate the idea of eternal punishment, which is a blasphemy against the justice and goodness of God, and the principal source of the scepticism, materialism, and indifferentism that have invaded the masses since their intelligence has begun to be developed. When once a mind has received enlightenment, in however slight a degree, the monstrous injustice of such an idea is immediately perceived; reason rejects it, and rarely fails to confound, in the same ostracism, the penalty against which it revolts and the God to whom that penalty is attributed. Hence the numberless ills which have burst upon you, and for which we come to bring you a remedy. The task we point out to you will be all the easier because the defenders of this belief have avoided giving a positive opinion in regard to it; neither the Councils nor the Fathers of the Church have definitely settled this weighty question. If Christ, according to the Evangelists and the literal interpretation of His allegorical utterances, threatens the guilty with a fire that is unquenchable, there is absolutely nothing in those utterances to prove that they are condemned to remain in that fire eternally.

"Hapless sheep that have gone astray! behold, advancing towards you, the Good Shepherd who, so far from intending to drive you

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for ever from His presence, comes Himself to seek you, that He may lead you back to the fold! Prodigal children! renounce your voluntary exile, and turn your steps towards the paternal dwelling! Your Father, with arms already opened to receive you, is waiting to welcome you back to your home!"

LAMENNAIS

"Wars of words! wars of words! has not enough blood been already shed for words, and must the fires of the stake be rekindled for them? Men dispute about the words 'eternal punishments,' 'everlasting burnings;' but do you not know that what you now understand by eternity was not understood in the same way by the ancients? Let the theologian consult the sources of his faith, and he, like the rest of you, will see that, in the Hebrew text, the word which the Greeks, the Latins, and the moderns, have translated as endless and irremissible punishment, has not the same meaning. Eternity of punishment corresponds to eternity of evil. Yes; so long as evil continues to exist among you, so long will punishment continue to exist; it is in this relative sense that the sacred texts should be interpreted. The eternity of punishments, therefore, is not absolute, but relative. Let a day come when all men shall have donned, through repentance, the robe of innocence, and, on that day, there will be no more weeping, wailing, or gnashing of teeth. Your human reason is, in truth, of narrow scope; but, such as it is, it is a gift of God, and there is no man of right feeling who, with the aid of that reason, can understand the eternity of punishment in any other sense. If we admit the eternity of punishment, we must also admit that evil will be eternal; but God alone is eternal, and He could not have created an eternal evil, without plucking from His attributes the most magnificent of them all, viz., His sovereign power; for he who creates an element destructive of his works is not sovereignly powerful. Plunge no more thy mournful glance, O human race! into the entrails of the earth, in search of chastisements! Weep, but hope; expiate, but take comfort in the thought of a God who is entirely loving, absolutely powerful, essentially just."

PLATO

"Union with the Divine Being is the aim of human existence. To the attainment of this aim three things are necessary—knowledge, love, justice: three things are contrary to this aim—ignorance, hatred, injustice. You are false to these fundamental principles when you falsify the idea of God by exaggerating His severity; thus suggesting to the mind of the creature that there is in it

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more clemency, long-suffering, love, and true justice, than you attribute to the Creator. You destroy the very idea of retribution by rendering it as inadmissible, by your minds, as is, by your hearts, the policy of the Middle Ages, with its hideous array of torturers, executioners, and the stake. When the principle of indiscriminating retaliation has been banished for ever from human legislation, can you hope to make men believe that principle to be the rule of the Divine Government ? Believe me, brothers in God and in Jesus Christ, you must either resign yourselves to let all your dogmas perish in your hands rather than modify them, or you must revivify them by opening them to the beneficent action that good spirits are now bringing to bear on them. The idea of a hell full of glowing furnaces and boiling cauldrons might be credible in an age of iron; in the nineteenth century it can be nothing more than an empty phantom, capable, at the utmost, of frightening little children, and by which the children themselves will no longer be frightened when they are a little bigger. By your persistence in upholding mythic terrors, you engender incredulity, source of every sort of social disorganisation; and I tremble at beholding the very foundations of social order shaken, and crumbling into dust, for want of an authoritative code of penalty. Let all those who are animated by a living and ardent faith, heralds of the coming day, unite their efforts, not to keep up antiquated fables now fallen into disrepute, but to resuscitate and revivify the true idea of penalty, under forms in harmony with the usages, sentiments, and enlightenment of your epoch.

"What, in fact, is 'a sinner' ? One who, by a deviation from the right road, by a false movement of the soul, has swerved from the true aim of his creation, which consists in the harmonious worship of the Beautiful, the Good, as embodied in the archetype of humanity, the Divine Exemplar, Jesus Christ.

"What is 'chastisement' ? The natural, derivative consequence of that false movement; the amount of pain necessary to disgust the sinner with his departure from rectitude, by his experience of the suffering caused by that departure. Chastisement is the goad which, by the smarting it occasions, decides the soul to cut short its wanderings, and to return into the right road. The sole aim of chastisement is rehabilitation; and therefore, to assume the eternity of chastisement is to deprive it of all reason for existing.

"Cease, I beseech you, the attempt to establish a parallelism of duration between good, essence of the Creator, and evil, essence

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of the creature; for, in so doing, you establish a standard of penalty that is utterly without justification. Affirm, on the contrary, the gradual diminution of imperfections and of chastisements through successive existences, and you consecrate the doctrine of the union of the creature with the Creator by the reconciliation of justice with mercy."

PAUL, APOSTLE

It is desired to stimulate men to the acquisition of virtue, and to turn them from vice, by the hope of reward and the fear of punishment but. if the threatened punishment is represented under conditions repugnant to reason, not only will it fail of its aim, but it will lead men, in rejecting those conditions, to reject the very idea of punishment itself. But let the idea of future rewards and punishments be presented to their mind under a reasonable form, and they will not reject it. This reasonable explanation of the subject is given by the teachings of Spiritism.

The doctrine of eternal punishment makes an implacable God of the Supreme Being. Would it be reasonable to say of a sovereign that he is very kind, very benevolent, very indulgent, that he only desires the happiness of all around him, but that he is, at the same time, jealous, vindictive, inflexibly severe, and that he punishes three-quarters of his subjects with the most terrific tortures, for any offence, or any infraction of his laws, even when their imputed fault has resulted simply from their ignorance of the laws they have transgressed? Would there not be an evident contradiction in such a statement of the sovereign's character? And can God's action be less consistent than that of a man?

The doctrine in question presents another contradiction. Since God fore-knows all things, He must have known, in creating a soul, that it would transgress His laws, and it must therefore have been, from its very formation, predestined by Him to eternal misery: but is such an assumption reasonable", or admissible? The doctrine of punishment proportioned to wrongdoing is, on the contrary, entirely consonant with reason and justice. God undoubtedly foresaw, in creating a given soul, that, in its ignorance, it would do wrong: but He has ordained that its very faults themselves shall furnish it with the means of becoming enlightened. through its experience of the painful effects of its wrong-doing He will compel it to expiate that wrong-doing, but only in order that it may be thereby more firmly fixed in goodness thus the door of hope is never closed against it, and the moment of its deliverance from suffering is made to depend on the amount of effort it puts forth to achieve its purification. If the doctrine of future punishment had always been presented under this aspect, very few would ever have doubted its truth.

The word eternal is often figuratively employed, in common parlance, to designate any long period of duration of which the end is not foreseen, although it is known that it will come in course of time. We speak, for instance, of "the eternal snows" of mountain-peaks and polar regions, although we know, on the one hand, that our globe will come to an end, and, on the other hand, that the state of those regions may be changed by the normal displacement of the earth's axis, or by some cataclysm. The word eternal, therefore, in this case, does not mean infinitely perpetual. We say, in the suffering of some long illness, that our days present the same "eternal round" of weariness; is it strange, then, that spirits who have suffered for years, centuries, thousands of ages even, should express themselves in the same way? Moreover, we must not forget that their state of backwardness prevents them from seeing the other end of their road, and that they therefore believe themselves to be destined to suffer for ever; a belief which is itself a part of their punishment.

The doctrine of material fire, of furnaces, and tortures, borrowed from the pagan Tartarus, is completely given up by many of the most eminent theologians of the present day, who admit that the word "fire" is employed figuratively in the Bible, and is to be understood as meaning moral fire (974). Those who, like ourselves, have observed the incidents of the life beyond the grave, as presented to our view by the communications of spirits, have had ample proof that its sufferings are none the less excruciating for not being of a material nature. And even as regards the duration of those sufferings, many theologians are beginning to admit the restriction

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indicated above, and to consider that the word eternal may be considered as referring to the principle of penalty in itself, as the consequence of an immutable law, and not to its application to each individual. When religious teaching shall openly admit this interpretation, it will bring back to a belief in God and in a future life many who are now losing themselves in the mazes of materialism.

Resurrection of the Body.

1010. Is the doctrine of the resurrection of tile body an implication of that of that of reincarnation, as now taught by spirits?

"How could it be otherwise? It is with regard to that expression as to so many others, that only appear unreasonable because they are taken literally, and are thus placed beyond the pale of credibility; let them only be rationally explained, and those whom you call free-thinkers will admit them without difficulty, precisely because they are accustomed to reflect. Freethinkers, like the rest of the world, perhaps even more than others, thirst for a future; they ask nothing better than to believe, but they cannot admit what is disproved by science. The doctrine of the plurality of existences is conformable with the justice of God it alone can explain what, without it, is inexplicable; how can you doubt, then, that its principle is to be found in all religions?"

1011. The Church, then, in the dogma of the resurrection of the body, really teaches the doctrine of reincarnation?

"That is evident; but it will soon be seen that reincarnation is implied in every part of Holy Writ. Spirits, therefore, do not come to overthrow religion, as is sometimes asserted; they come, On the contrary, to confirm and sanction it by irrefragable proofs. But, as the time has arrived to renounce the use of figurative language, they speak without allegories, and give to every statement a clear and precise meaning that obviates all danger of false interpretation. For this reason there will be, ere long, a greater number of persons sincerely religious and really believing than are to be found at the present day."

Physical science demonstrates the impossibility of resurrection according to the common idea. If the relics of the human body remained homogeneous, even though dispersed and reduced to powder, we might conceive the possibility of their being reunited at some future time ; but such is not the case. The body is formed of various elements, oxygen, hydrogen, azote, carbon, etc., and these elements, being dispersed, serve to form new bodies, so that the same molecule of carbon, for example, will have entered Into the composition of many thousands of different bodies (we speak only of human bodies, without counting those of animals); such and such an individual may have, in his body, molecules that were in the bodies of the men of the earliest ages; and the very same organic molecules that you have this day absorbed in your food may have come from the body of some one whom you have known; and so on, Matter being finite in quantity, and its transformations being infinite in number, how is it possible that the innumerable bodies formed out of it should be reconstituted with the same

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elements? Such a reconstruction is a physical impossibility. The resurrection of the body can, therefore, be rationally admitted only as a figure of speech, symbolising the fact of reincarnation; thus interpreted, it has in it nothing repugnant to reason, nothing contrary to the data of physical science.

It is true that, according to theological dogma, this resurrection is not to take place until the "Last Day," while, according to spiritist doctrine, it takes place every day; but is not this picture of the "Last Judgement" a grand and noble metaphor, implying, under the veil of allegory, one of those immutable truths that will no longer be met with incredulity when restored to their true meaning? To those who carefully ponder the spiritist theory of the future destiny of souls, and of the fate that awaits them as the result of various trials they have to undergo, it will be apparent that, with the exception of the condition of simultaneousness, the judgement which condemns or absolves them is not a fiction, as is supposed by unbelievers. It is also to be remarked that the judgement which assigns to each soul its next place of habitation is the natural consequence of the plurality of worlds, now generally admitted; while, according to the doctrine of the "Last Judgement," the earth is supposed to be the only inhabited world.

Paradise, Hell and Purgatory.

1012. Are there, in the universe, any circumscribed places set apart for the joys and sorrows of spirits, according to their merits?

"We have already answered this question. The joys and sorrows of spirits are inherent in the degree of perfection at which they have arrived. Each spirit finds in himself the principle of his happiness or unhappiness; and, as spirits are everywhere, no enclosed or circumscribed place is set apart for either the One or the other. As for incarnated spirits, they are more or less happy or unhappy, according as the world they inhabit is more or less advanced."

-"Heaven" and "hell," then, as men have imagined them, have no existence?

"They are only symbols; there are happy and unhappy spirits everywhere. Nevertheless, as we have also told you, spirits of the same order are brought together by sympathy; but, when they are perfect, they can meet together wherever they will,"

The localisation of rewards and punishments in fixed places exists only in man's imagination; it proceeds from his tendency to materialise and to circumscribe the things of which he cannot comprehend the essential infinitude.

1013. What is to be understood by Purgatory?

"Physical and moral suffering; the period of expiation, It is almost always upon the earth that you are made by God to undergo your purgatory, and to expiate your wrong-doing."

What men call purgatory is also a figure of speech, that should be understood as signifying, not any determinate place, but the state of imperfect spirits who have to expiate their faults until they have attained the complete purification that will raise them to the state of perfect blessedness. As this purification is effected by means of various incarnations, purgatory consists in the trials of corporeal life

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1014. How is it that spirits who, by their language, would seem to be of high degree, have replied according to the commonly-received ideas to those who have questioned them in the most serious spirit concerning hell and purgatory?

"They speak according to the comprehension of those who question them, when the latter are too fully imbued with preconceived ideas, in order to avoid any abrupt interference with their convictions. If a spirit should tell a Mussulman, without proper precautions, that Mahomet was not a true prophet, he would not be listened to with much cordiality."

- Such precautions are conceivable on the' part of spirits who wish to instruct us; but how is it that others, when questioned as to their situation, have replied that they were suffering the torture's of hell or of purgatory?

"Spirits of inferior advancement, who are not yet completely dematerialised, retain a portion of their earthly ideas, and describe their impressions by means of terms that are familiar to them. They are in a state that allows of their obtaining only a very imperfect foresight of the future; for which reason it often happens that spirits in erraticity, or but recently freed from their earthly body, speak just as they would have done during their earthly life. Hell may be understood as meaning a life of extremely painful trial, with uncertainty as to the future attainment of any better state; and purgatory as a life that is also one of trial, but with the certainty of a happier future. Do you not say, when undergoing any very intense physical or mental distress, that you are suffering 'the tortures of the damned' ? But such an expression is only a figure of speech, and is always employed as such."

1015. What is to be understood by the expression, "a soul in torment"?

"An errant and suffering soul, uncertain about its future, and to whom you can render, in its endeavour to obtain relief, an assistance that it often solicits at your hands by the act of addressing itself to you." (664.)

1016. In what sense is the word heaven to be understood?

"Do you suppose it to be a place like the Elysian Fields of the ancients, where all good spirits are crowded together pell-mell, with no other care than that of enjoying, throughout eternity, a passive felicity? No; it is universal space; it is the planets, the

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stars, and all the worlds of high degree, in which spirits are in the enjoyment of all their faculties, without having the tribulations of material life, or the sufferings inherent in the state of inferiority."

1017. Spirits have said that they inhabited the third, fourth, and fifth heaven, etc.; what did they mean in saying this?

"You ask them which heaven they inhabit, because you have the idea of several heavens, placed one above the other, like the storeys of a house, and they therefore answer you according to your own ideas; but, for them, the words 'third,' 'fourth,' or 'fifth' heaven, express different degrees of purification, and consequently of happiness. It is the same when you ask a spirit whether he is in hell; if he is unhappy, he will say 'yes,' because, for him, hell is synonymous with suffering; but he knows very well that it is not a furnace. A Pagan would have replied that lie was in Tartarus."

The same may be said in regard to other expressions of a similar character, such as "the city of flowers," "the city of the elect," the first, second, or third "sphere." etc., which are only allegorical, and employed by some spirits figuratively, by others from ignorance of the reality of things, or even of the most elementary principles of natural science.

According to the restricted idea formerly entertained in regard to the localities of rewards and punishments, and to the common belief that the earth was the centre of the universe, that the sky formed a vault overhead, and that there was a specific region of stars. men placed heaven up above, and hell down below; hence the expressions to "ascend into heaven," to be in "the highest heaven." to be "cast down into hell." etc. Now that astronomy, having traced up the earth's history and described its constitution, has shown us that it is one of the smallest worlds that circulate in space and devoid of any special importance, that space is infinite, and that there is neither "up" nor "down" in the universe, men have been obliged to cease placing heaven above the clouds. and hell in the "lower parts of the earth." As for purgatory. no fixed place was ever assigned to it.

It was reserved for Spiritism to give. in regard to all these points, an explanation which is at once. and in the highest degree, rational. sublime, and consoling, by showing us that we have in ourselves our "hell" and our "heaven," and that we find our "purgatory" in the state of incarnation, in our successive corporeal or physical lives.

1018. In what sense should we understand the words of Christ, 'My kingdom is not of this world'?

"Christ, in replying thus, spoke figuratively. He meant to say that He reigned only over pure and unselfish hearts, He is wherever the love of goodness holds sway; but they who are greedy for the things of this world, and attached to the enjoyments of earth, are not with Him."

1019. "Will the reign of goodness ever be established upon the earth?"

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"Goodness will reign upon the earth when, among the spirits who come to dwell in it, the good shall be more numerous than the bad; for they will then bring in the reign of love and justice, which are the source of good and of happiness. It is through moral progress and practical conformity with the laws of God, that men will attract to the earth good spirits, who will keep bad ones away from it; but the latter will not definitively quit the earth until its people shall be completely purified from pride and selfishness.

"The transformation of the human race has been predicted from the most ancient times, and you are now approaching the period when it is destined to take place. All those among you who are labouring to advance the progress of mankind are helping to hasten this transformation, which will be effected through the incarnation, in your earth, of spirits of higher degree, who will constitute a new population, of greater moral advancement than the human races they will gradually have replaced. The spirits of the wicked people who are mowed down each day by death, and of all who endeavour to arrest the onward movement, will be excluded from the earth, and compelled to incarnate themselves elsewhere; for they would be out of place among those nobler races of human beings, whose felicity would be impaired by their presence among them. They will be sent into never worlds, less advanced than the earth, and will therein fulfil hard and laborious missions, which will furnish them with the means of advancing, while contributing also to the advancement of their brethren of those younger worlds, less advanced than themselves. Do you not see, in this exclusion of backward spirits from the transformed and regenerated earth, the true significance of the sublime myth of the driving out of the first pair from the garden of Eden? And do you not also see, in the advent of the human race upon the earth, under the conditions of such an exile, and bringing within; itself the germs of its passions and the evidences of its primitive inferiority, the real meaning of that other myth, no less sublime, of the fall of those first parents, entailing the sinfulness of their descendants? 'Original sin,' considered from this point of view, is seen to consist in the imperfection of human nature; and each of the spirits subsequently incarnated in the human race is therefore responsible only for his own imperfection and his own wrong-doing, and not for those of his forefathers.

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"Devote yourselves, then, with zeal and courage to the great work of regeneration, all you who are processed of faith and good will; you will reap a hundredfold for all the seed you sow, Woe to those who close their eyes against the light; for they will have condemned themselves to long ages of darkness and sorrow! Woe to those who centre their enjoyment in the pleasures of the earthly life; for they will undergo privations more numerous than their present pleasures! And woe, above all, to the selfish; for they will find none to aid them in bearing the burden of their future misery!"

CONCLUSION

I

HE who, in regard to terrestrial magnetism, knows only the little figures of ducks which, with the aid of a magnet, are made to swim about in a basin of water, would find it difficult to understand that those toy-figures contain the secret of the mechanism of the universe and of the movement of worlds, He, whose knowledge of Spiritism is confined to the table- turning which was the starting-point of the modern manifestations, is in a similar position; he regards it merely as an amusement, a social pastime, and cannot understand how a phenomenon so simple and so common, known to antiquity and even to savage tribes, can be connected with the weightiest questions of psychology and of human life, For the superficial observer, what connection can exist between a table that turns and the morality and future destiny of the human race? But as, from the simple pot which, in boiling, raises its lid (a pot, too, which has boiled from the remotest antiquity), there has issued the potent motor with whose aid man transports himself through space and suppresses distance, so, be it known to you, O ye who believe in nothing beyond the material world! there has issued, from the table-turning which provokes your disdainful smiles, a new philosophy that furnishes the solution of problems which no other has been able to solve, I appeal to all honest adversaries of Spiritism, and I adjure them to say whether they have taken the trouble to study what they criticise; reminding them that criticism is necessarily of no value unless the critic knows what he is talking about, To ridicule that of which we know nothing, which we have not made the subject of conscientious examination, is not to criticise, but to give proof of frivolity and want of judgement. Assuredly, if we had present this philosophy as being the product of a human brain, it would have met with less disdain, and would have had the honour of being examined by those who profess to be the leaders of opinion: but it claims to be derived from spirits; what an absurdity! It is

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scarcely held to deserve a single glance by those who judge it merely by its title, as the monkey in the fable judged of the nut by its husk, But put aside all thought of the origin of this book; suppose it to be the work of a man, and say, in truth and honesty, whether, after having carefully read it, you find in it anything to laugh at?

II

Spiritism is the most formidable opponent of materialism, and it is therefore not surprising that it should have the materialists for adversaries; but as materialism is a doctrine which many of those who hold it hardly dare to avow, they cover their opposition with the mantle of reason and science, Their shafts are especially aimed at the marvellous and the supernatural, which they deny; and as, according to them, Spiritism is founded on the marvellous and the supernatural, they declare that it can be nothing more than a ridiculous delusion.

Strange to say, some of those who are most incredulous in regard to Spiritism deny the possibility of its phenomena in the name of religion, of which they often know as little as they do of Spiritism. They do not reflect that, in denying, without restriction, the possibility of the "marvellous" and the "supernatural," they deny religion, for religion is founded on revelation and miracles; and what is revelation if not extra-human communications? All the sacred writers, from Moses downwards, have spoken of this order of communications. And what are miracles if not facts of a character emphatically marvellous and super-natural, since they are, according to liturgical acceptance, derogations from the laws of nature, so that, in rejecting the marvellous and the supernatural, they reject the very basis of all religions ? But it is not from this point of view that we have to consider the subject. Belief in spirit-manifestation does not necessarily settle the question of miracles; that is to say, whether God does, or does not, in certain cases, derogate from the eternal laws that regulate the universe; it leaves, in regard to this question, full liberty of belief to all. Spiritism says, and proves, that the phenomena on which it is based are supernatural only in appearance, that they only appear to some persons to be such, because they are unusual, and out of the pale of facts hitherto known; and that they are no more supernatural than all the other phenomena which

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the science of the present day is explaining, though they appeared to be "miraculous" in the past. All spiritist phenomena, without exception, are the consequence of general laws; they reveal to us one of the powers of nature, a power hitherto unknown, or rather that has not hitherto been understood, but which observation shows us to be included in the scheme of things. Spiritism, therefore, is founded less on the marvellous and the supernatural than is religion itself; and those who attack it on this score do so because they know not what it really is. As for those who oppose it in the name of science, we say to them, be they ever so learned, "If your science, which has taught you so many things, has not taught you that the domain of nature is infinite, you are scientific to very little purpose."

III

You say that you wish to cure your age of a malady of credulity that threatens to invade the world. Would you prefer to see the world invaded by the incredulity that you seek to propagate? Is it not to the absence of all belief that are to be attributed the relaxing of family-ties and the greater part of the disorders that are undermining society? By demonstrating the existence and immortality of the soul, Spiritism revives faith in the future, raises the courage of those who are depressed, and enables us to bear the vicissitudes of life with resignation. Do you call this an evil? Two doctrinal theories are offered for our acceptance; one of them denies the existence of a future life, the other proclaims and proves it; one of them explains nothing, the other explains everything, and, by so doing, appeals to our reason; one of them is the justification of selfishness, the other gives a firm basis to justice, charity, and the love of one's fellow-creatures; one of them shows only the present and annihilates all hope, the other consoles us by showing the vast field of the future; which of the two is the more pernicious?

There are some, among the most sceptical of our opponents, who give themselves out as apostles of fraternity and progress; but fraternity implies disinterestedness and abnegation of one's own personality, and by what right do you impose such a sacrifice on him to whom you affirm that, when he is dead, everything will be over for him, that soon, perhaps to-morrow, he will be nothing

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more than a worn-out machine, out of gear, and thrown aside as so much rubbish? Why, in that case, should he impose on himself any privation ? Is it not more natural that he should resolve to live as agreeably as possible during the few brief instants you accord to him? And would not such a resolve naturally suggest to him the desire to possess largely in order to secure the largest amount of enjoyment? And would not this desire naturally give birth to jealousy of those who possess more than he does? And, from such jealousy to the desire to take from them what they possess, is there more than a single step? What is there, in fact, to restrain him from doing so? The law? But the law does not reach every case. Conscience? the sense of duty? But what, from your point of view, is conscience? and upon what do you base the sense of duty? Has that sense any motive or aim if it be true that everything ends for us with our present life? In connection with such a belief, only one maxim can be reasonably admitted-viz., "Every man for himself." Fraternity, conscience, duty, humanity, progress even, are but empty words. Ah! you who proclaim such a doctrine, you know not how much harm you do to society, nor of how many crimes you incur the responsibility! But why do we speak of responsibility? Nothing of the kind exists for the materialist; he renders homage only to matter.

IV

The progress of the human race results from the practical application of the law of justice, love, and charity. This law is founded on the certainty of the future; take away that certainty, and you take away its corner-stone. It is from this law that all other laws are derived, for it comprises all the conditions of human happiness; it alone can cure the evils of society; and the improvement that takes place in the conditions of social life, in proportion as this law is better understood and better carried out in action, becomes clearly apparent when we compare the various ages and peoples of the earth. And if the partial and incomplete application of this law have sufficed to produce an appreciable improvement in social conditions, what will it not effect when it shall have become the basis of all social institutions? Is such a result possible ? Yes; for as the human race has already accomplished ten steps, it is evident that it can accomplish twenty, and so on. We can infer the future from the past. We see that

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the antipathies between different nations are beginning to melt away; that the barriers which separated them are being overthrown by the progress of civilisation, and that they are joining hands from one end of the world to the other. A larger measure of justice has been introduced into international law; wars occur less frequently, and do not exclude the exercise of humane sentiments; uniformity is being gradually established in the relations of life; the distinctions of races and castes are being effaced, and men of different religious beliefs are imposing silence on sectional prejudices, that they may unite in adoration of one and the same God. We speak of the nations who are at the head of civilisation (789-793). In all these relations, men are still far from perfection, and there are still many old ruins to be pulled down before the last vestiges of barbarism will have been cleared away; but can those ruins withstand the irresistible action of progress, that living force which is itself a law of nature ? If the present generation is more advanced than the last, why should not the next be more advanced than the present one ? It will necessarily be so through the force of things; in the first place, because each generation, as it passes away, carries with it some of the champions of old abuses, and society is thus gradually reconstituted with new elements that have thrown aside antiquated prejudices; in the second place, because, when men have come to desire progress, they study the obstacles which impede it, and set themselves to get rid of them. The fact of the progressive movement of human society being incontestable, there can be no doubt that progress will continue to be made in the future.

Man desires to be happy; it is in his nature so to do. He only he has not obtained complete happiness, and that this happiness but for which result progress would have no object; for where would be the value of progress for him if it did not improve his position ? But when he shall have obtained all the enjoyments that can be afforded by intellectual progress, he will perceive that he has not obtained complete happiness, and that this happiness is impossible without security in the social relations; and as he can only obtain this security through the moral progress of society in general, he will be led, by the force of things, to labour for that end, to the attainment of which, Spiritism will furnish him with the most effectual means.

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V

Those who complain that spiritist belief is spreading in all directions and threatening to invade the world, thereby proclaim its power; for no opinion that is not founded on reason and on fact could become general. Therefore, if Spiritism is taking root everywhere, making converts in every rank of society, and especially among the educated classes, as is admitted by all to be the case, it is evident that it must be founded in truth. That being so, all the efforts of its detractors will be made in vain; an assertion borne out by the fact that the ridicule attempted to be heaped upon it by those who have hoped thereby to arrest its march seems only to have given it new life. This result fully justifies the assurances that have been so constantly given us by our spirit-friends, who have repeatedly said to us, "Do not allow yourself to be made uneasy by opposition. Whatever is done against you will turn to your advantage, and your bitterest opponents will serve you in spite of themselves. Against the will of God, the ill-will of men is of no avail."

Through the moral teachings of Spiritism, the human race will enter upon a new phase of its destiny; that of the moral progress which is the inevitable consequence of this belief. The rapid spread of spiritist ideas should cause no surprise, being due to the profound satisfaction they give to those who adopt them with intelligence and sincerity; and as happiness is what men desire above all things, it is not surprising that they should embrace ideas which impart so much happiness to those who hold them.

The development of these ideas presents three distinct periods. The first is that of curiosity, excited by the strangeness of the phenomena produced; the second, that of reasoning and philosophy; the third, that of application and consequences. The period of curiosity is gone by, for curiosity has only a brief existence; the mind, when satisfied in regard to any novelty, quitting it at once for another, as is not its habit in regard to subjects that awaken graver thought and that appeal to the judgement. The second period has already begun; the third will certainly follow. The progress of Spiritism has been specially rapid since its essential nature and its scope have been more correctly understood, because it touches the most sensitive fibre of the human heart, viz., the desire of happiness, which it augments immeasurably, even in the present world; this, as previously remarked, is the cause of its

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wide acceptance, the secret of the force that will make it triumph. It renders happy those who understand it, while awaiting the extension of its influence over the masses. How many a spiritist, who has never witnessed any of the physical phenomena of spirit-manifestation, says to himself, "Besides the phenomena of Spiritism, there is its philosophy, which explains what NO OTHER has ever explained. That philosophy furnishes me, through arguments drawn from reason only and independently of any sanction but that of reason, with a rational solution of problems that are of the most vital importance to my future; it gives me calmness, security, confidence; it delivers me from the torments of uncertainty. In comparison with results so valuable, the question of the physical phenomena is of secondary importance."

To those who attack this philosophy, we reply, "Would you like to have a means of combating it successfully? If so, here it is: Bring forward something better in its place; find a more philosophic solution of the problems it solves: give to man ANOTHER CERTAINTY that shall render him still happier. But you must thoroughly understand the meaning of the word certainty, for man only accepts as certain what appears to him to be reasonable. You must not content yourselves with saying that the thing is not so, which is a mode of proceeding altogether too easy. You must prove, not by negation, but by facts, that what we assert to exist has no existence, has never been, and CANNOT BE, and above all, having shown that it has no existence, you must show what you have to offer in its place; and you must prove that the tendency of Spiritism is not to make men better, and consequently happier, by the practice of the purest morality—that sublime and simple morality of the Gospels, which men praise so much, and practise so little. When you have done all this, you will have a right to attack it."

Spiritism is strong because its bases are those of religion itself, viz., God, the soul, the rewards and punishments of the future; because it shows those rewards and punishments to be the natural consequences of the earthly life; and because, in the picture it presents of the future, there is nothing which the most logical mind could regard as contrary to reason. What compensation can you offer for the sufferings of the present life, you whose whole doctrine consists in the negation of the future? You base your teachings on incredulity; Spiritism is based on confidence in God: while the latter invites all men to happiness, to hope, to true

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fraternity, you offer them, in prospect, ANNIHILATION, and in the present, by way of consolation, SELFISHNESS: it explains everything, and you explain nothing; it proves by facts, while your assertions are devoid of proof. How can you expect that the world should hesitate between these two doctrines?

To suppose that Spiritism derives its strength from the physical manifestations, and that it might therefore be put an end to by hindering those manifestations, is to form to one's self a very false idea of it. Its strength is in its philosophy, in the appeal it makes to reason, to common sense. In ancient times it was the object of mysterious studies, carefully hidden from the vulgar; at the present day it has no secrets, but speaks clearly, without ambiguity, mysticism, or allegories susceptible of false interpretations. The time having come for making known the truth, its language is such as all may comprehend. So far from being opposed to the diffusion of the light, the new revelation is intended for all mankind; it does not claim a blind acceptance, but, urges every one to examine the grounds of his belief, and as its teachings are based upon reason, it will always be stronger than those who base their arguments upon annihilation. Would it be possible to put a stop to spirit-manifestations, by placing obstacles in the way of their production? No; for such an attempt would have the effect of all persecutions, viz., that of exciting curiosity, and the desire of making acquaintance with a forbidden subject. Were spirit-manifestations the privilege of a single individual, it would undoubtedly be possible, by preventing his action, to put an end to them; but unfortunately for our adversaries, those manifestations are within everybody's reach, and are being obtained by all, from the highest to the lowest, from the palace to the cottage. It might be possible to prevent their production in public, but, as is well known, it is not in public, but in private, that they are most successfully produced; and as any one may be a medium, how would it be possible to prevent each family in the privacy of its home, each individual in the silence of his chamber, each prisoner, even, in his cell, from holding communication with the invisible beings around them, in the very presence of those who should endeavour to prevent them from doing so? If mediums were forbidden to exercise their faculty in one country, how would it be possible to hinder them from doing so elsewhere throughout the rest of the world, since there is not a single country, in either continent, in which mediums are not to be found? In order to

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shut up all the mediums, it would be necessary to incarcerate half the human race; and even if it were possible, which would scarcely be easier, to burn all the spiritist books in existence, they would at once be reproduced, because the source from which they emanate is beyond the reach of attack, and it is impossible to imprison or to burn the spirits who are their real authors.

Spiritism is not the work of any man; no one can claim to have created it, for it is as old as creation itself. It is to be found everywhere, in all religions, and in the Catholic religion even more than in the others, and with more authoritative inculcation, for the Catholic dogma contains all that constitutes Spiritism; admission of the existence of spirits of every degree; their relations, occult and patent, with mankind; guardian-angels, reincarnation, the emancipation of the soul during the present life, second-sight, visions, and manifestations of every kind, including even tangible apparitions; As for demons, they are nothing else than bad spirits; and with the exception of the belief that the former are doomed to evil for ever, while the path of progress is not closed against the others, there is, between them, only a difference of name.

What is the special and peculiar work of modern Spiritism? To make a coherent whole of what has hitherto been scattered; to explain, in clear and precise terms, what has hitherto been wrapped up in the language of allegory; to eliminate the products of superstition and ignorance from human belief, leaving only what is real and actual: this is its mission, but that of a founder does not belong to it. It renders evident that which already exists; it co-ordinates, but it creates nothing, for its elements are of all countries and of every age. Who, then, could flatter himself with the hope of being able to stifle it, either by ridicule or by persecution? If it were possible to proscribe it in one place, it would reappear in another, or on the very spot from which it had been banished, because it exists in the constitution of things, and because no man can annihilate that which is one of the powers of nature, or veto that which is in virtue of the Divine decrees.

But what interest could any Government have in opposing the propagation of spiritist ideas? Those ideas, it is true, are a protest against the abuses that spring from pride and selfishness; but although such abuses are profitable to the few, they are injurious to the many, and Spiritism would therefore have the

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masses on its side, while its only adversaries would be those who profit by the abuses against which it protests. So far from Governments having anything to dread from the spread of spiritist ideas, the tendency of those ideas being to render men more benevolent towards one another, less greedy of material things, and more resigned to the orderings of Providence, they constitute, for the State, a guarantee of order and of tranquillity.

VII

Spiritism presents three different aspects, viz., the facts of spirit-manifestation, the philosophic and moral principles deducible from those facts, and the practical applications of which those principles are susceptible; hence three classes into which its adherents are naturally divided, or rather, three degrees of advancement by which they are distinguished: 1st, Those who believe in the reality and genuineness of the spirit-manifestations, but confine themselves to the attestation of these, and for whom Spiritism is merely an experimental science; 2d, Those who comprehend its moral bearings; 3d, Those who put in practice, or, at least, endeavour to put in practice, the system of morality which it is the mission of Spiritism to establish. Whatever the point of view experimental, scientific, or moral, from which these strange phenomena are considered, every one perceives that they are ushering in an entirely novel order of ideas, which must necessarily produce a profound modification of the state of the human race; and every one who understands the subject also perceives that this modification can only be for good.

As for our adversaries, they may also be grouped into three categories: 1st, Those who systematically deny whatever is new, or does not proceed from themselves, and who speak without knowing what they are talking about. To this class belong all those who admit nothing beyond the testimony of their senses they have not seen anything, do not wish to see anything, and are still more unwilling to go deeply into anything; they would, in fact, be unwilling to see too clearly. for fear of being obliged to confess that they have been mistaken; they declare that Spiritism is chimerical insane. utopian. and has no real existence, as the easiest way of settling the matter; they are the wilfully incredulous. With them may be classed those who have condescended to glance at the subject, in order to be able to say, "I

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have tried to see something of it, but I have not been able to succeed in doing so;" and who do not seem to be aware that half an hour's attention is not enough to make them acquainted with a new field of study; 2d, Those who, although perfectly aware of the genuineness of the phenomena, oppose the matter from interested motives. They know that Spiritism is true; but being afraid of consequences, they attack it as an enemy. 3d, Those who dread the moral rules of Spiritism as constituting too severe a censure of their acts and tendencies. A serious admission of the truth of Spiritism would be in their way; they neither reject nor accept it, but prefer to close their eyes in regard to it. The first class is swayed by pride and presumption; the second by ambition; the third by selfishness. We should seek in vain for a fourth class of antagonists, viz., that of opponents who, basing their opposition on a careful and conscientious study of Spiritism, should bring forward positive and irrefutable evidence of its falsity.

It would be hoping too much of human nature to imagine that it could be suddenly transformed by spiritist ideas. The action of these undoubtedly is not the same, nor is it equally powerful, in the case of all those by whom they are professed; but their result, however slight it may be, is always beneficial, if only by proving the existence of an extra-corporeal world, and thus disproving the doctrines of materialism. This result follows from a mere observation of the phenomena of Spiritism; but, among those who, comprehending its philosophy, see in it something else than phenomena more or less curious, it produces other effects. The first and most general of these is the development of the religious sentiment, even in those who, without being materialists, are indifferent to spiritual things; and this sentiment leads to contempt of death—we do not say to a desire for death, for the spiritist would defend his life like anyone else, but to an indifference which causes him to accept death, when inevitable, without murmuring and without regret, as something to be welcomed rather than feared, owing to his certainty in regard to the state which follows it. The second effect of spiritist convictions is resignation under the vicissitudes of life. Spiritism lead us to consider everything from so elevated a point of view that the importance of terrestrial life is proportionally diminished, and we are less painfully affected by its tribulations; we have consequently more courage under affliction, more moderation in our desires, and also

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a more rooted repugnance to the idea of shortening our days, Spiritism showing us that suicide always causes the loss of what it was intended to obtain. The certainty of a future which it depends on ourselves to render happy, the possibility of establishing relations with those who are dear to us in the other life, offer the highest of all consolations to the spiritist; and his field of view is widened to infinity by his constant beholding of the life beyond the grave, and his growing acquaintance with conditions of existence hitherto veiled in mystery. The third effect of spiritist ideas is to induce indulgence for the defects of others; but it must be admitted that, selfishness being the most tenacious of human sentiments, it is also the one which it is most difficult to extirpate. We are willing to make sacrifices provided they cost us nothing, and provided especially that they impose on us no privations; but money still exercises an irresistible attraction over the greater number of mankind, and very few understand the word "superfluity" in connection with their own personality.

The abnegation of our personality is, therefore, the most eminent sign of progress.

VIII

"Do spirits," it is sometimes asked, "teach us anything new in the way of morality, anything superior to what has been taught by Christ? If the moral code of Spiritism be no other than that of the gospel, what is the use of it?" This mode of reasoning is singularly like that of the Caliph Omar, in speaking of the Library of Alexandria: - "If," said he, "it contains only what is found in the Koran, it is useless, and in that case must be burned; if it contains anything that is not found in the Koran, it is bad, and in that case, also, it must be burned." No; the morality of Spiritism is not different from that of Jesus; but we have to ask, in our turn, whether, before Christ, men had not the law given by God to Moses? Is not the doctrine of Christ to be found in the Decalogue? But will it therefore be contended that the moral teaching of Jesus is useless? We ask, still further, of those who deny the utility of the moral teachings of Spiritism, why it is that the moral teachings of Christ are so little practised. and why it is that those who rightly proclaim their sublimity are the first to violate the first of His laws, viz., that of universal charity" Spirits now come not only to confirm it, but also to

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show us its practical utility; they render intelligible, patent, truths that have hitherto been taught under the form of allegory; and, with this reinduction of the eternal truths of morality, they also give us the solution of the most abstract problems of psychology.

Jesus came to show men the road to true goodness. Since God sent Him to recall to men's mind the divine law they had forgotten, why should He not send spirits to recall it to their memory once again, and with still greater precision, now that they are forgetting it in their devotion to pride and to material gain? Who shall take upon himself to set bounds to the power of God, or to dictate His ways? Who shall say that the appointed time has not arrived, as it is declared to have done by spirits, when truths hitherto unknown or misunderstood are to be openly proclaimed to the human race, in order to hasten its advancement? Is there not something evidently providential in the fact that spirit-manifestations are being made on all points of the globe? It is not a single man, an isolated prophet, who comes to arouse us; light is breaking forth on all sides, and a new world is being opened out before our eyes. As the invention of the microscope has revealed to us the world of the infinitely little, the existence of which was unsuspected by us, and as the telescope has revealed to us the myriads of worlds the existence of which we suspected just as little, - so the spirit-communications of the present day are revealing to us the existence of an invisible world that surrounds us on all sides, that is incessantly in contact with us, and that takes part, unknown to us, in everything we do. Yet a short time, and the existence of that world, which is awaiting every one of us, will be as incontestable as is that of the microscopic world, and of the infinity of globes in space. Is it nothing to have made known that new world, to have initiated us into the mysteries of the life beyond the grave? It is true that these discoveries, if such they can be called, are contrary to certain received ideas; but have not all great scientific discoveries modified, and even overthrown, ideas as fully received by the world, and has not our pride of opinion had to yield to evidence? It will be the same in regard to Spiritism, which ere long will have taken its place among the other branches of human knowledge.

Communication with the beings of the world beyond the grave enables us to see and to comprehend the life to come, initiates us into the joys and sorrows that await us therein according to our deserts, and thus brings back to spiritualism those who had come to

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see in man only matter, only an organised machine; we are therefore justified in asserting that the facts of Spiritism have given the death-blow to materialism. Had Spiritism done nothing more than this, it would be entitled to the gratitude of all the friends of social order; but it does much more than this, for it shows the inevitable results of evil, and, consequently, the necessity of goodness. The number of those whom it has brought back to better sentiments, whose evil tendencies it has neutralised, and whom it has turned from wrongdoing, is already larger than is usually supposed, and is becoming still more considerable every day; because the future is no longer for them a vague imagining, a mere hope, but a fact, the reality of which is felt and understood when they see and hear those who have left us lamenting or rejoicing over what they did when they were upon the earth. Whoever witnesses these communications begins to reflect on the reality thus brought home to him, and to feel the need of self-examination, self-judgement, and self-amendment.

IX

The fact that differences of opinion exist among spiritists in regard to certain points of doctrine has been used by opponents as a handle against it. It is not surprising that, in the beginning of a new science, when the observations on which it is based are still incomplete, the subjects of which it treats should have been regarded by its various adherents from their own point of view, and that contradictory theories should thus have been put forth. But a deeper study of the facts in question has already overthrown most of those theories, and, among others, that which attributed all spirit-communications to evil spirits, as though it were impossible for God to send good spirits to men; a supposition that is at once absurd, because it is opposition to the facts of the case, and impious, because it is a denial of the power and goodness of the Creator. Our spirit-guides have always advised us not to trouble ourselves about divergences of opinion among spiritists, assuring us that unity of doctrine will eventually be established; and we accordingly see that this unity has already been arrived at in regard to the major part of the points at issue, and that divergences of opinion, in regard to the others, are disappearing day by day.

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To the question, "While awaiting the establishment of doctrinal unity, upon what basis can an impartial and disinterested inquirer arrive at a judgement as to the relative merits of the various theories put forth by spirits?" the following reply was given: -

"The purest light is that which is not obscured by any cloud; the most precious diamond is the one which is without a flaw; judge the communications of spirits, in like manner, by the purity of their teachings. Do not forget that there are, among spirits, many who have not yet freed themselves from their earthly ideas. Learn to distinguish them by their language; judge them by the sum of what they tell you; see whether there is logical sequence in the ideas they suggest, whether there is, in their statements, nothing that betrays ignorance, pride, or malevolence; in a word, whether their communications always bear the stamp of wisdom that attests true superiority. If your world were inaccessible to error, it would be perfect, which it is far from being; you have still to learn to distinguish error from truth; you need the lessons of experience to exercise your judgement and to bring you on. The basis of unity will be found in the body of doctrine among the adherents of which good has never been mixed with evil; men will rally spontaneously to that doctrine, because they will judge it to be the truth.

"But what matter a few dissidences of opinion, more apparent than real ? The fundamental principles of Spiritism are every where the same, and should unite you all in a common bond; that of the love of God and the practice of goodness. Whatever you suppose to be the mode of progression and the normal conditions of your future existence, the aim proposed is still the same, viz., to do right; and there is but one way of doing that."

If there be, among spiritists, differences of opinion in regard to some points of theory, all of them are agreed in regard to the fundamentals of the matter; unity, therefore, already exists among them, with the exception of the very small number of those who do not yet admit the intervention of spirits in the manifestations, and who attribute these either to purely physical causes, which is contrary to the axiom, "Every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause," or to a reflex action of our own thought, which is disproved by the facts of the case. There may, then, be different schools, seeking light in regard to the points of spiritist doctrine that are still open to controversy; there ought not to be rival sects, making opposition to one another. Antagonism should

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only exist between those who desire goodness, and those who desire, or do, evil; but no one who has sincerely adopted the broad principles of morality laid down by Spiritism can desire evil or wish ill to his neighbour, whatever may be his opinions in regard to points of secondary importance. If any school be in error, it will obtain light, sooner or later, if it seeks honestly and without prejudice; and all schools possess, meanwhile, a common bond that should unite them in the same sentiment. All of them have a common aim; it matters little what road they take, provided it leads to the common goal. None should attempt to impose their opinion by force, whether physical or moral; and any school that should hurl its anathema at another would be clearly in the wrong, for it would evidently be acting under the influence of evil spirits. The only force of an argument is its intrinsic reasonableness; and moderation will do more to ensure the triumph of the truth than diatribe envenomed by envy and jealousy. Good spirits preach only union and the love of the neighbour; and nothing malevolent or uncharitable can ever proceed from a pure source.

As bearing on the subject of the foregoing remarks, and also as a fitting termination of the present work, we subjoin the following message from the spirit of Saint Augustine—a message conveying counsels well worthy of being laid to heart by all who read it:—

"Long enough have men torn one another to pieces, anathematising each other in the name of a God of peace and of mercy, whom they insult by such a sacrilege. Spiritism will eventually constitute a bond of union among them, by showing what is truth and what is error; but there will still be, and for a long time to come, scribes and pharisees who will reject it, as they rejected Christ. Would you know the quality of the spirits who influence the various sects into which the world is divided? Judge them by their deeds and by the principles they profess. Never did good spirits instigate to the commission of evil deeds; never did they counsel or condone murder or violence; never did they excite party-hatreds, the thirst for riches and honours, or greed of earthly things. They alone who are kind, humane, benevolent, to all, are counted as friends by spirits of high degree; they alone are counted as friends by Jesus, for they alone are following the road which He has shown them as the only one which leads to Him."

SAINT AUGUSTINE

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