



WILLIAM OXLEY.

**WILLIAM OXLEY**  
**HIS LIFE AND TIMES, FROM A SPIRITUAL STANDPOINT.**

Written By Himself

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## **William Oxley -- His Life and Times, From a Spiritual Standpoint**

This sketch of my Life and Times is given for the sole purpose of showing how I have been led into my present position in regard to what is known as Spiritualism; which Movement is one of the most important that has affected the human race, since it existed on the planet Earth.

It requires an artist to make a good and faithful portrait; but, when it comes to the sketching of one's own physiological likeness, it is difficult for us to see ourselves as others see us. However, I will essay the work and leave the result.

Every human being has his or her own part to play in the grand Drama of Life, and "each must play their part, or else be played upon." Heretofore the mass of mankind have thought that they were the players, or actors, but unless I mistake the purport of the sweeping wave of Spiritual Influx now covering the whole earth, we shall all find ere long that we, who are inhabitants of this globe, are the played upon! The work of Spiritualism is to demonstrate, that the real Players are those Intelligences and Beings who inhabit Spheres that are not visible to the human eye, but, nevertheless, are all-potent; and this being so, it will be acknowledged that they are the actors, and we are the re-actors. If this be granted, then, as one of the re-actors, I may be absolved from any charge of vanity in giving out so much of my history as may be sufficient to show who and what I am; and the reader must kindly allow me to tell my tale in my own way. There is no romance in my history, for it merely represents the ordinary way of life, as lived by multitudes in similar position.

I was born on May 1st (Virgin's Day), 1823, the fifth out of six children, born by my mother, at Doncaster, Yorkshire, A town celebrated for its annual races. Myself and a younger sister, married to a Wesleyan Minister in Australia, are the only now living ones. The eldest child, Elizabeth, died at the age of two years, and my parents frequently told me that she could read any chapter in the New Testament. My father inherited a good deal of house property in the town, built by my grandfather, who had been a successful man of business. At that time the town was an important stage on the great North Road, connecting London with York, and the stream of traffic constantly passing through made it lively; and what with this and its races the town was of some note. But in 1830 the era of railways commenced the traffic was diverted; many of the principal hotels closed; and excepting on weekly market days, the town had a godforsaken appearance. As a

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consequence, the value of property depreciated, and many houses stood tenantless for year after year; and amongst them many of my father's best tenements. He struggled manfully against the ebbing tide, but was eventually obliged to succumb, and to part with all the property which my grandfather had left him. Had he foreseen that the Great Northern Railway would be commenced in two years from the time he let it go, he would have been in very good, if not in affluent, circumstances; for, immediately the Bill was passed, property began to rise in value, and is now, I suppose, double its original worth. However, after this occurrence, he was appointed Secretary to the Gas Company, which he held till his death; and with this, and the income from some "settled" property, he lived happy and comfortable.

At an early age I was sent to boarding school, which I exchanged for a day school at thirteen years of age. My boarding-school days are anything but a pleasant recollection, and many times, with my arms resting on the railings of the play-ground, I sighed and thought, how long are the days of my bondage. I had some pleasure in my day-school two years, as they were relieved by the home amenities; but from fifteen to nineteen, during the time of my apprenticeship to a drapery firm in a neighbouring town, my trials were heavy, for the "master" was a hard, rough man. However, all things come to an end sometimes, and by a stroke of fortune, owing to the dissolution of the firm, my articles were annulled, after serving four years, and I was free to become my own master. I took situations as draper's assistant in Malton, Leeds and Barnsley; but not liking the business I abandoned it, and shortly after I settled in Manchester, as clerk with a civil and mechanical engineer; and married in 1847 on what would now be thought a small salary, but by economy we managed to make ends meet and tie, as I had been made a commercial traveller, with corresponding advance.

Not being satisfied with this position, I sought for opportunity to commence on my own account; and accidentally meeting with a person who had a certain machine to dispose of, I bought his patterns, &c., and commenced the business of machinist, &c. I was very sanguine of success, and having opened up ground in Scotland, I introduced my machine to a good firm in Fifeshire, who gave me "an order on trial." The machine was sent, and in due time I followed, expecting to bring back a book full of orders. But my fortune was not to be made by that machine; for on going to the works where it was fixed, the manager told me that it was quite 'useless, and not adapted to their work, and that it would be returned. My state of mind on hearing this may be better felt than

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described; and I had then to face the question—What next? I found the manager of a sympathetic turn, and I asked him to spend the evening with me at my hotel. A thought suddenly flashed upon my mind, no doubt inspired by unseen but watchful friends, and I inquired of him, if he thought I could take up another line of business, and if so, would he help me; to which he very kindly I responded in the affirmative, and supplied me with samples I from the stores, and gave me prices, etc., &c. But for that thought, I know not what would have resulted. I went through that district and was successful in obtaining orders. This was the beginning of my present business, to which I first gave the name of "Mill Furnisher," &c. My early resolves, if not realized to the full, have been sufficiently so as to bring me to my present position, and herewith I am content.

My own family—large in number, having had eleven children although now reduced to four, and "one who is not," —has caused me no sorrowful experiences so far as their external life is concerned, excepting the "one who is not." He was our third living son, a smart youth; good French scholar, and a volunteer; but one fine autumnal evening, twelve years ago, while sitting at my front parlour window, I saw him take a book under his arm and go out, as I thought for an evening walk. We have never been able to get the slightest trace of him from that day to this.

Some years ago I was surprised to receive a copy of a modern History of Doncaster, by the late Chas. Hatfield, Esq.,<sup>1</sup> the then mayor of the town. In the work was given a pedigree of my father, reaching back to 1501 A.D., which he had out of respect for my father collated from the parish registers, comprising eight generations. They appear to have been respectable tradesmen. One, named Nicholas, was a Capital Burgess, that is, a Councillor of the town, who died in office, in 1600 A.D. Two others, my great, and great great grandfathers, were made "Freemen," and I myself have been a member of the Corporation of the Borough, in which I reside, for three years, so that the Family Records are not without useful civic members. There may be a love of ancestry unbegotten of pride, and such is mine. Out of this comes patriotism, chivalry, and other kindred qualities, and one good result of this, is the care to be bestowed in the manifestation of a life that shall not tarnish the "Family Record." What is given above is sufficient to establish my "personality," and I now pass on to my "individuality," which is quite another degree of life. We leave the personality behind us when we enter

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<sup>1</sup> *Historical Notices of Doncaster*, published in 1866.

the portals of the grave; but the "individuality " we take with us, and that is never lost, for it is our real Self.

There are some who say that circumstances make the man, while others maintain the reverse, and say that man makes his circumstances or surroundings. But, a prior question is involved—Who made the man and his circumstances? It is problems such as these that have engaged my thoughts for many years, and if, as I think, I have, obtained a satisfactory solution, it is due to ray experience derived from my association with so-called Spiritualism. My external labour arises from necessity, and pertains alone 'to the " personality," but my internal work is from choice, and it is this which manifests the "individuality." In my case these two have nothing in common, and I anticipate the time with confidence when I shall lay down my " personality " and its external work, to enter upon a fuller enjoyment of the life that pertains to the "individuality." We manifest this only in part, while in earthly conditions, owing to what we call our "circumstances," and these are not our own to control, however we may flatter ourselves to the contrary. How my "individuality" was developed, must be seen through the "circumstances" which were necessary for its own manifestation, and this is determined by our mental and spiritual proclivities. In my case the process was carried out under the influences of heredity, and natural as well as religious training on the part of my parents, whose efforts were directed to make me a follower of them, even as they were " followers of Christ." To my view, this kind of parental exercise of power, is, in many cases, pernicious, as it surrounds their offsprings with bonds, which make it hard to sever, and that not without much pain and suffering. At least it was so with me, and I resolved that I would leave my children to follow out the bent of their own minds, without undue constraint on my part. I do not repine, for the discipline I have undergone has not been without its use, nevertheless, I think it most unwise for parents to " train up a child in the way he should go," as interpreted by religionists of the past and present days.

My parents were Wesleyan Methodists, and my grandparents before them, who were amongst the earliest adherents of the Wesleys about 1780. My father never tired of telling of the persecutions which the early Methodists underwent; they were subjected to many indignities, and much "horseplay," as it was called in those days. For instance, if any of them happened to possess vehicles, the wheel-pins would be surreptitiously removed, and in several cases bodily injury was the consequence! But, " none of these things move me," was the watchword of those old, sturdy Yorkshire people, and through

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good report—of which there was very little—and through evil report, they steadfastly upheld the cause which, undoubtedly, was the great spiritual movement of the eighteenth century. My father became converted in his nineteenth year, in consequence of two remarkable dreams he had on two successive nights; and joining the Society he was soon put in harness, and filled many offices; besides being a Lay Preacher for close upon sixty years. With but few exceptions, he went to his "country appointments," every Sunday, no matter what weather he had to face; and I have known him on many occasions walk twenty-two miles and preach three times on the same day. His amiability, modesty, and fair intellectual attainments caused him to be regarded with great respect, both among his "brethren" and the townsfolk. Being, like most religionists, of a very positive temperament, he looked upon Swedenborgianism as a system of falsehood, and Spiritualism, as the manifestation of the Wicked One, come to deceive the nations of the earth; and for the last twelve years of his life, there was an estrangement between us, on account of "my apostacy from the faith," which was not healed even to his dying day.

Never having come in contact with any other religious system, no wonder that my own early spiritual life should have its commencement in that system. I passed through the process of "conversion" in my twentieth year, and as this may be new to many of my readers, I will describe it; for beyond all cavil it is a spiritual movement pure and simple. For two or three weeks I had been under "serious convictions," causing a mental perturbation that was marked by unhappiness and a fear of "God's wrath," &c. One evening, I was seated in the room, alone on one side, and the others (young men connected with the establishment at which I was an assistant) were at a card-table playing cards. While pondering over the things that were passing through my mind, I suddenly experienced a thrill of inward joy; in fact, there and then "I found peace." My emotions overcame me, and I was obliged to retire to the privacy of my own bed-room, to give thanks for the "great thing that God had done for me," (the meaning of these phrases will be well known to such as have had a Methodist training). This event changed the current of my life, and thenceforth I devoted my energies to the prosecution of the work in connection with that Society. After my marriage I was appointed to fill various offices, and was zealous in every good word and work. Not being of the number of those who are content "to sit at ease in Zion," I worked hard, and nearly every week evening, and the whole Sunday, was devoted to the work of the Church. But a change was soon to come over the scene, and that in a way undreamt of.

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I was then living in Altrincham (a suburban town of Manchester), and taking an active part in a local "Revival" at the chapel, caused by the earnestness of one of the ministers. At the close of the service there were generally a good number of "earnest enquirers." Amongst these was a young man, who sent for me and said, "I want you to tell me what is it, that I must believe in order to be saved, for I am in great distress?" Whether there was a peculiar earnestness in the tone; or what it was, I know not; but for the first time in my life, I was confronted with a question that I had always taken for granted without a doubt. I was speechless, and after making an effort, I retired from the chapel. I never recovered from the effects of that arrow which entered deep into my soul; and then it was that I began to examine into the doctrines of the Church, and the more I reasoned upon them the more unsettled I became, and my zeal began to wane. Just about this time, 1864, I removed to Manchester; and although I still kept up my connection with the Methodist Society, yet I was an altered man, and far from satisfied with my position.

Another change was at hand, and I knew it not. I, apparently by accident, met with a man who had been a Methodist, but had left it and become a Swedenborgian. He lent me some books, which I perused with avidity, as they appeared to present religious truth in a clear and eminently rational manner, such as I had had no prior conception of whatever. I was being drawn into this, to me, new system much against my will, for I gauged the position, and counted the cost of breaking away from my old religious associations; and I hesitated until the uncertainty was irksome. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" was ever sounding in my inner hearing, until at length I determined to have the matter settled one way or another. None but those who pass through such experiences can know of the soul-agony that had to be undergone. I happened to be on a visit to my Father's house in Doncaster; and retiring to rest, I felt a strange sensation; commencing from the feet upwards to the heart; and while this was going on, the room seemed to be filled with an extraordinary kind of light, and I was just beginning to discern the outline of a figure; when I cried out Enough! I will do what thou wilt! and as gradually as the sensation came on, so it went away. Possibly I might have been entranced for the time being, I know not: but in the morning I rose, indeed, "a new creature," and for three days and nights I experienced a joy and elasticity, that my former "conversion" was nothing to be compared with. I knew what it meant. I sent in my resignation, and dissolving the ties that had bound me to the Methodist Society, I joined the Swedenborgian Church.

I commenced the study of Swedenborg's—what I now call—Philosophy, as well as his Theology, and I was made a Lay Preacher, being what is termed an "acceptable" one. But this was not to be my abiding home and spiritual resting place, for another and a still greater change awaited me. If Methodism is an emotional religion, Swedenborgianism is an intellectual one; and if it were possible to amalgamate the two, I think the product would be the best " Church" in the Christian Dispensation. But for my passage through the Swedenborgian school of thought, I should never have been able to understand Spiritualism.

My next and most important change of all, occurred in 1872. I met a friend, whom I had not come in contact with for twenty years; and I found that he, like myself, had departed from the old faith; he had gone to the Unitarians, and I to the one above-named. He asked me if I knew anything of Spiritualism, to which I replied in the negative. He then invited me to his house, and join in some "sittings." I did so, and although the manifestations were somewhat crude, yet I saw sufficient to awaken my curiosity, and I resolved to get to the bottom of it if possible, and to accomplish this I spared neither time nor money. The result was eminently satisfactory. But so far, it was the phenomenal that had engaged my attention, -which I investigated upon scientific principles, little thinking that there was a far more important side, which was so soon to engage my thoughts and attention. In the following year I met my friend again, who told me that they were having meetings of a different order to what they had had previously, while confined to his own family circle, and he again invited me to join them, which I did; and there I came in contact with a new phase; and in a year from thence I sent in my resignation, and retired from the Swedenborgian Church. For, strange to say, as a body, the Swedenborgians are dead against Spiritualism; for while admitting spiritual agency, they choose to class it as the work of "disorderly spirits," and consequently dangerous to meddle with. But although I retired from the Swedenborgian Church, Swedenborg and I have not parted company; and never will, for the more I see and know, the more am I certified that his system of Philosophy, as based upon the Science of Correspondences, is the true and only key to unlock all the mysticisms pertaining to spirit and matter. Spiritual phenomena are all symbolic, and whoever understands the Law of Symbols, and the Science of Correspondences, cannot fail to understand the true meaning and interpretation. With this Master-Key in hand, any and every door may be unlocked and opened. I have come to the conclusion that Swedenborg himself did



not understand the value of the priceless discovery he had made, for his own Seership does not appear to have penetrated much beyond the spiritual-natural spheres; and like Euclid, in regard to his discovery of mathematical principles, so with Swedenborg. They both had to leave them for others, who applied them and will continue to apply them to the natural and spiritual good, and elevation of mankind.

But to return. The meetings at my friend's house were conducted outwardly much upon the old evangelical lines, being opened by singing, prayer, and the reading of the Word; after which the medium, who was a youngish lady of fine and delicate build, and evidently of a very refined nature, was entranced; and the spiritual sphere which surrounded her gave a charm and power that I had never witnessed in either of the two churches that I had been connected with. At one of the earliest of these meetings, I was startled by hearing a deep rolling bass voice, in broad Scotch, coming from this delicate feminine organism, which in her ordinary state was a physical impossibility. It purported to come from one who said that in earth-life he was known as James Guthrie; and after giving us many incidents in his life, especially connected with his trial, conviction, and execution •—all of which were unknown to any that were present at the meeting—he addressed me, and said: "You are going to my native country, and you shall prove the truth of every word I have uttered; give yourself no trouble, for the information will come in a way that will both surprise and convince you." Suffice it to say, it did come by ways and means that would take too long to detail, but I found every word he had told was true. Here was a fact that no theory of mind-reading could meet, for there was not one present who knew anything about such a man; and what should bring his spirit into our midst was a conundrum that none of us could then guess; but it came out afterwards clear enough.

After some preliminaries of this and kindred character, the utterances and communications through the Sensitive began to assume a methodical form; and of a totally different kind to what I had ever heard before. I found, to my surprise, that there was a symbolic meaning, which I had no difficulty in interpreting; and finding them so peculiar, and withal so interesting, I began to take notes, and expound them to the rest of the company. This was the commencement of a seven years' connection with the circle, through which the *Angelic Revelations, concerning the Origin, Ultimatum, and Destiny of the Human Spirit* were given; and although it was broken up and re-formed three times, so as to form "conditions" for the ever-advancing life-thoughts to be given,

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yet I was kept all through as the Recorder, to take down verbatim, the utterances, as they fell from the mouth of the entranced Sensitive. This Work comprises four volumes in print, the fifth is now in the press, and I have sufficient MSS. for the sixth, which I anticipate will be printed in due time.

Seeing that I have only been the amanuensis for the various Intelligences and Angelic Beings, who have revealed this order of truths to the world through us, I can speak with the greater boldness and confidence of this remarkable work. I am now tolerably conversant with the leading ideas pertaining to the religious systems and schools of thought of the past, not excepting the Occult; and I am bold to say that it stands out unique in the history of literature. This Work contains not merely a system of Philosophy, but it reveals the "Way of Life," in its descent and ascent, that future generations will comprehend better than the present. To the ordinary mind, not initiated into the Science of Symbolism, and unacquainted with the operation of Occult Law, these Volumes will appear as the outcome of the brain of the mystic; but as, in the rolling ages of the New Era, the human mind is emancipated from the thralldom of the senses, it will discover a beauty, a power, and a life, that will be duly and fully appreciated. No system of the past, so far as I know, has ever attempted to delineate the manner of the descent of a Spirit-atom of life, from its genesis in the interior Heavens, down to its ultimatum in a physical organism upon this earth; yet, it is unfolded in this work: and more, we have proof that cannot be gainsaid.

While engaged in recording and editing the "Angelic Revelations," I was impelled to another work on my own account, and I began to formulate the knowledge I had acquired in a series of papers, afterwards published in book form, and entitled *Philosophy of Spirit*, illustrated by a new version, in poetic style, of the "Bhagavat Gita," an ancient Indian episode. I had a copy of this work presented by a friend, many years ago, but which had been on my shelves almost unread. I was "forced," by some interior power, to take down the book, and read it through twice without seeing anything in it, and I wondered what it meant. A third time I took it in hand, and then a light shone upon it, that enabled me to see its beauty and value. Under "influence" I commenced to translate and transpose, which generally stopped as soon as I had done so much; and this continued until the work was complete.

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My next essay was *Egypt; and the Wonders of the Land of the Pharaohs*, the result of my visit to that classic spot of earth ; and which was brought about by circumstances as strange as others which had caused me to change my manner of intellectual and spiritual life. As this is well known to the readers of the Medium, I need say nothing further in reference to this work.

The above details are sufficient to establish my "individuality," and in my next paper, both my personality and individuality will be laid aside, while I dilate upon the, to me, more agreeable work of noticing the " Times in which we live," and what is involved therein, in relation to the great Spiritual Movement of our own day.

I now enter upon the third part, which treats of my position, and identification with the Spiritualistic Movement. I have taken no active part in public work, because that was not my forte; for however well-meant the efforts of others to form societies and establish places of meeting for worship, &c., yet, to my view, they savoured too much of the old style, of which I had had enough; and I therefore thought I could be more useful in doing my own work, in the way which seemed pointed out.

One of the peculiarities in connection with the Movement is, that all attempts at organization on the old lines end in failure, and the reason is not far to seek. It is diverse from all that has preceded it, and therefore will seek out, or make, new channels for itself, using the material at hand, and utilizing it for the time being to meet the wants of the hour. Therefore no fault can be found with these early attempts, for they are so many steps in the right direction.

I assume that the history of the development of this great Movement, from its simple commencement in America in 1848 A.D., is well known to the reader, so that it would be superfluous on my part to play the part of historian. Simple and apparently accidental as it was, it has developed into a factor in human life and history, which cannot be ignored. Its advent into the world is not marked by the enunciation of any special, or new, Leaders and Founders of systems. It comes with no offer of reward to its acceptors, nor yet with denunciations to its rejectors. The dividing line between the two classes appears to be the demarcation that distinguish the Spiritualist from the Materialist. The latter, as a rule, is either a disbeliever, or a know-nothing, in reference to human immortality; while on the other hand, the Spiritualist is convinced of its truth,

by proofs that to him, or her, are irresistible. This is the distinguishing feature between the Spiritualist and non-Spiritualist. Beyond this, and the acceptance of Spirit-communion as a basic fact, as yet, no concrete system of thought, and thence of life, has been elaborated, and to which all its adherents can acquiesce in as the exponent of the Spiritualistic doctrines. Spirit communion—by which is meant the actuality of converse and contact with those who were once like us inhabitants of earth, but who are now in other states of conscious being and existence,—is the base upon which the future superstructure will be reared. Many of its pseudo friends and enemies are trying to reduce it to animal magnetism; human will-power; psychological displays; and mesmerism, &c., &c.; but, to all candid and sincere minds, these terms are subterfuges, to save the admission of what would otherwise be inconvenient. But like John Bunyan's sturdy army of Doubters, so there is a host of Nicodemuses, who for fear of external circumstances come secretly to enquire, and from these the fighting element is constantly recruited.

Leaving the basic fact of Spirit-communion, which has made Spiritualism, so-called, what it is: What of it? Why now? and—What is, and will be, its effects upon mankind? From the least reflective mind, the acknowledgment comes that the present is an important era in the history of the Race; and that from some cause or other, an impetus has been given which rushes on with accelerated speed, and is quickening human life to a degree that the sluggish past never dreamt of. We say the cause lies in the Cause-world, and what we see are the effects of a new inflow of thought and life; which is now popularly known as Spiritualism. The novelty is not in the thing itself, but in its manifestation, and it is this which concerns us as embodied spirits. When we arrive at the knowledge of what Spirit is composed, we shall then know something of Life and its manifestations, for Spirit is Life! The cardinal error of the materialistic scientist is in the endeavour to make Matter a something with characteristics of its own, and quite distinct and separate from Spirit, hence the doctrine of the eternity of matter. But how simple and rational the proposition that, Matter is Spirit in a state of solidification, and in ever-changing conditions. The more dense its presentation, the more attenuated is the Spirit principle that expresses itself through that specific form. There is no known form of matter, but that can be reduced by man to what science terms its primary gases; yet this only takes us a step nearer to Pure Spirit, for what are gases other than the rarified, and to this extent spiritualized, elements of the all-potent Spirit or Life-principles, that are cognizant to our senses?

Speaking from the religious standpoint, there is a remarkable prophetic utterance put into the mouth of Jesus, who speaks of a New Dispensation to be under the aegis of the Paraclete, or "Spirit of Truth." Discarding the personality, which is on the face of it accommodated language, it refers to a future development, when a spiritual perception and understanding of Truth should supersede the order of mentality, that could only perceive it by, instead of in, the phenomena in which it is shrouded; and surely this is the work of Spiritualism, which embraces Spiritual Truth of all degrees. It appeals to the intellect as well as the heart of man, and, by its gentle yet omnipotent force, gradually prepares the mind for an upliftment from the sensuous to the spiritual degree of conscious life.

Spiritualism presents a new feature, in that it embraces Science, Philosophy, and Religion; and under its sway the old antagonism that is supposed to exist between these will disappear, and the harmony of the Cosmos will be seen to be in perfect order; because subject to Law, which no finite being can transcend. When the transitional state is passed, it will gradually assume a form, but totally unlike the systems of the past. Revolutionary as it is, to the highest degree, yet it will not have its onward march disgraced by violence and bloodshed; for it comes, not as a destroying, but as a light and life-giving, power, hence change in systems will not be effected until the preparatory and educative processes have been undergone. This condensed sketch, to my view, shows what Spiritualism is, and what is involved therein.

Surprise is often manifested at the present aspect of the Spiritual Movement, with its conflicting teachings, and so-called lying spirit-communications: and it appears as if we must wade through an amass of quicksand before we can arrive at solid truth that is reliable and trustworthy. But a little reflection should incite to patience. All the apparent contradictory communications, are the "tuning up of the orchestra," which in due time will discourse music of a higher class than human ears have yet listened to. Coming out from the old Churchianic and other systems, it seems natural to expect something better, but one and all will find that Spiritualism is no ready-made system into which we can enter and find rest. It comes to the man in the state in which he is, and from that point he must begin the work of self-development. This is the key to the disorder that is now so apparent. We think ourselves upright, true, and good'; and yet at times are the prey of lying or malevolent spirits, as we think. But who knows himself? By the action of

the great Law of Attraction (which no scientist will question) a spirit of this class may come, but it could not come unless there was something within ourselves that attracted it, and it is only by sometimes bitter experience that we can develop a repellent power.

There is no natural living organism without its parasite; and these "spirits" are the parasites that feed upon our spiritual organism. We, in our short-sightedness, look upon these excrescences as nuisances; but, if we knew all, we should see that they have a useful and needful purpose to perform. What we regard as abominable excreta possesses a certain property, that causes the earth to yield in richer abundance the food required to sustain the physical life of man and beast. So, likewise, the spiritual earth is enriched by the life-giving properties of these spiritual excrescences. Strange doctrine this, some will say. Yea, but it is fairly within the reach and demonstration of Spiritual Science; and here I leave it.

My next effort is to show some sort of cause why this Spiritual Movement should come upon us now, with a force hitherto unexperienced? Here science comes to our aid, for "science" is knowledge of facts, and when the facts are known, the tabulation follows. As there are stages in the life of an embodied human being, so there are corresponding stages in the life of man upon earth; and as in the one, so in the other and greater Man. Who can tell the exact moment, when the infant passes into the child; the child into youth; and the youth into the man? Yet none can dispute that the changes are brought about by the development of the functions within the organism. We can only tell approximately; and by the same rule we can determine the various specific developments in the life of humanity as a whole. At certain periods in the history of the Race, a man, or as I think, a number of men more sensitive to the internal force than their fellows, give out "thoughts," which when reduced from the ideal to the practical eventuate in new orders of life, social, political, and religious. This occurs at more or less regular intervals, that are termed Cyclic Periods, which mark or mark off the rise of new systems, especially religious ones, known to us as Churches or Dispensations. Every one may be traced back to their approximate origin by the aid of astronomical and—the at present unfashionable—Astrological Sciences; for in every known instance this external human mental development coincides with some remarkable Planetary, Solar, or Sidereal phenomena. So marked is this coincidence, that the myths, legends, and what not, that have gathered round the human agents, apply equally and with greater truth to the orbs; and this brings me to the larger question of Planetary life.

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We have now outgrown the old notion—based upon appearances—that our Earth is the centre of the universe, and that the Sun, and Moon, and Planets are our satellites and servants: for we know that our globe is one, and that not of the most important in dimensions, of a series, all moving in regular defined orbits, but separated from each other by enormous distances of space; and thus the planetary bodies form one system, dependent upon each other to sustain the balance and equilibrium. That all the planets of our system are inhabited by human beings, similar, but perchance more or less progressed, can scarcely admit of a doubt; and this being so, there must of necessity be a connection in some form or other. In plain terms, as the totality of human life on our Earth, expresses the life of humanity as a whole, so the totality of Planetary human life expresses the life of the greater humanity, sustained and developed by its parental Solar Source. This, in due time, will be abundantly proved by spiritual, if not by natural, Science. Taking this as granted, without stopping to note the astronomical coinciding planetary phenomena of the past, I will now speak of that which indicates the present, and notify a fact which is patent to all.

I refer to the Grand Assembly of five Planets in the sign Taurus in the year 1881. On the 25th June, in that year, they were in nearly a straight line with the Earth, which was then on the opposite side of the Sun. We may leave the astronomers to be satisfied with the simple registration of this as a remarkable phenomenon; but as Spiritualists, we begin our explorations from the point at which they stop, and treasures of knowledge are obtainable which they have no inkling of. By the aid of the Science of Spiritual Astrology, together with the exercise of our intuitive faculties, we know that this event was fraught with great issues to the inhabitants of our Earth. The flow of the circulating Planetary life-current reaches to every member of the System; giving off, or receiving as required, for the development of the grand unitary life. Speaking in the language of Science, we may term these forces Electric and Magnetic. In truth, they are these and vastly more, for they are Life-forces! Along these currents—unseen by the organic eye, but sensed by the spiritual organism—come the life-thoughts thrown off by the Beings, embodied and disembodied, who inhabit and are connected with the orbs which are more progressed than our own. As these are absorbed and expended by the Earth Race, they in turn throw off for the use of the Planets not so far advanced as our own. Those who can accept Swedenborg's account of the distinguishing features of the various planetary bodies, will find an interesting study in this field, as the Law of Correspondences furnishes the key. Space does not permit me to enter into further

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details; but I trust that enough has been given to show that external astral phenomena and accompanying mental and spiritual development, are not more coincidences, but are as inseparable as cause and effect; and this reference is a not unimportant part of the answer to the question—Why now?

I will now briefly notify the effects that will follow from the action of this great Spiritual Life-wave upon our Earth. Coming events cast their shadows before them, and these "shadows" are nothing more nor less than the preparatory states and developments of our own times. During the present century, humanity, as a whole, has "lived faster," and developed more, than in the preceding eighteen centuries. It is needless to quote, in support of this, the giant strides made in the science and art of living, by means of the utilization of heat and light in their various combinations. Many of us now living have witnessed the rise and development of steam power, and it is the memories of the past that cause the term "slow-coach" to be applied to such as lag behind in the rush for material wealth and position. Vast as have been the accomplished facts on the material plane of life, yet even these will sink into a very subordinate position in comparison with what is coming, and which, to an almost certainty, will be inaugurated in the next century. So much for the external, which the reader can amplify to his heart's content.

Let us look for a moment at the internal side. The various Sciences have reached a perfection of development that eclipses the wildest dreams of the "Arabian Nights," and, from the earth beneath us, Science is extracting the record of her own past history, stretching back to periods that we may put in figures, but never realize in thought. This is the result of a new development of mental activity on the part of the few; but what will follow when the mass is permeated with the new thought and life-force? Not the least important manifestation of the New Order is the fact, that in our country we have lived to see Education becoming universal, and knowledge placed within the reach of all. What does this mean? When the monopoly of learning and knowledge is removed, it is easy to divine that this is the precursor of the downfall of all other monopolies. Vested interests and hereditary privileges, based as they are on the ignorance of the past, must go by the board.

Just at the right time, and in the right way, the new Spiritual force and power comes, and by a gradual evolution, without unnecessary violence, prevents what would



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otherwise issue in a terrific Revolution! Statesmen are now awaking to the fact, that the broader and deeper the base of political rights, the more secure is the social superstructure. It is the first, but by no means the last, step in the re-formation of Society; the rest will follow in due course. Even the conservative and stagnant Orient is stirred to its depths, and the emancipation of Japan is a striking proof of it. India is awaking to the enormity of caste; and ere long China must follow suit. Barrier after barrier is being removed and swept away, in order that the truly spiritual idea of Universal Brotherhood may become an actuality.

Having thus roamed over generals, I will deal with the specifics in regard to the manifestations of spiritual agency and power, which are not by any means confined to Christendom ; for all nations and people are affected thereby.

The greatest novelty, is the testimony afforded to the senses by what are termed physical manifestations, ranging from the simple "table" phenomena, up to the actual appearance of temporary representations of living human forms, some of which are so perfectly developed as to be capable of speaking and writing, &c., &c. As this latter manifestation pertains to the adytum, a desecration ensues when it is. made an exhibition and a matter of mundane traffic. Past bitter experiences have proved the folly of introducing the unprepared into this " holy place," and whenever this power is manifested it should be scrupulously guarded from the foot of the profane and irreverent. Spiritual gifts are not to be had by money and price, and consequently they should be held in sacred trust for such as can be benefited thereby. Of course, I am not advocating that every psychic Sensitive is to be at the beck and call of every "investigator" who chooses to command their time, health and strength for nothing, but there is an orderly, and disorderly, way, and happy he or she who takes the right way.

Another manifestation of Spiritual power, is the trance state, during which the sensitives, not infrequently illiterate and uneducated, will give expression to thoughts and utterances quite beyond their own natural attainments; and without a hack or a stammer, will take up any given subject and dilate thereon, utterly unconscious of what passes through their lips. These oftentimes take the form of personal narratives, ranging from the present to the historical past, given professedly by those who declare that they once lived upon our Earth in the same conditions, but now they speak from another state of existence and being. My valued friend, known as A.T.T.P., has a mile of MSS. of

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this description, which would form a goodly number of volumes; and assuredly, neither he nor his sensitive combined could invent or compose one tithe of these extraordinary productions. With an energy that is surprising, and an unswerving trust in the genuineness of their origin, he has devoted his declining years to the arduous labor of recording verbatim what is thus given, and gives out unsparingly for the good and enlightenment of his fellows. If the result is not an incontestible proof of immortality -- where shall we find one?

Another phase is that of living human "telescopes" and "telephones," through whom, by means of clairvoyance and clairaudience, we can see and converse with the inhabitants of other Earths besides our own. It is true, that this is only partially developed, but it contains the promise of a mighty future; and when suitable conditions are developed, and instruments of higher power are provided, we shall then converse with the inhabitants of Saturn and Jupiter as easily as we do with our own antipodes. This is all in the programme.

There are other and higher Spheres than those pertaining to Planetary existence, in which Beings dwell who are the forms of Wisdom and of Love in actuality, and who are cognizant of the spring and outflow of Life itself: and it is now being rendered possible for communications to be received from this Supernal Order of Beings.

Not having overdrawn the effects of the modern Spiritual wave, as witnessed by the various manifestations I have so meagrely sketched, I must remind the reader, that great as are these signs and wonders, yet they only mark the commencement of an Era that will crown all that have preceded and if this is merely the budding forth, what will the fruitage be?

As I am addressing Spiritualists, and not the general public, I will refer to another and peculiar manifestation, which goes far to establish my point as to the erratic period in which we live. I have spoken of Messianic Cycles, and the supposed appearance of Personal Messiahs, who were not credited with being such in their life time, but were exalted into such by means and for purposes which I will not stop to specify. The Christian Dispensation has left a legacy in the form of a prophecy of another advent, which many interpret as a Second Advent of its Founder; while others regard it, with truer instinct, as a Spiritual Matter. Nor is this confined to the Christian System; for the

"expectancy" is equally prevalent among the Mahommedan, and other Systems. It reached its crisis, and we have the spectacle of living people who, being the subjects of spirit-communion, are impressed with the idea that they are the special ones who fulfil the ancient prophecy! and within my own knowledge I can specify twelve who are competing for Messianic honour and position! Each one, with whom I have come in contact, was careful to remind me of the saying referring to true and false Christs, or Prophets, &c., and were very strong upon the point of the genuine truthfulness of their own claims, and of the falseness of the claims of their competitors. There are two Mahdis (if not more), who at the present moment are each claiming the honours of the Mahommedan Messiahship. All these, without being uncharitable, may be classed as spiritual curiosities; for when they and their pretensions have died out, they will have served the purpose of landmarks to fix the close of one epoch and the commencement of another. No more Hero-worship, for Spiritualism will have none of it, and these deluded ones will, sooner or later, discover that deified Personalities form no part of the outpouring of the Spirit of Truth.

One more brief notice, and I conclude this Sketch of "My Times." I allude to the rise and spread of what is known as the Theosophical Movement; which, whatever may be said to the contrary, forms a phase of the great Spiritualistic Movement. It had its origin in the house of Mrs. E. H. Britten, when residing in New York, U.S.A. (I think about six or seven years ago). After flourishing for a time, it was broken up, and Mrs. B., with others, washed their hands of the affair. Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky then removed to India, where the Society was reformed, under the aegis of the Mahatmas, who are represented as adepts, possessing occult powers, which are said to throw Spiritualistic phenomena into the shade; and it is claimed for, but not by, them, that this secret and mysterious Order of Himalayan Recluses possesses all the knowledges of the Cosmos, and are the custodians of the highest wisdom that the world contains. But so far as I have been able to penetrate, I find a yawning chasm between the "claims" and the substantiation thereof. That it is doing excellent work in India I do not doubt; but when such astounding claims are made, and it is expected that the cultured minds of the West are to swallow them without question, as Spiritualists we shall assuredly not yield the position—which was acquired long before "Theosophy" was heard of—either to Theophists or Occultists. It will work its own way, without asking permission from the Oriental Societies, or tolerating their interference. The laurels of Spiritualism; which is of Western, not Eastern, birth, have been fairly and honourably won, and she will not give

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them up to an "unknown quantity," which must produce evidence of its own superiority, very different from that so far adduced, ere it will meet with adhesion and reciprocation from enlightened Spiritualists.

There is a dark side to the Spiritual Movement, in which the fungus outgrowths fasten on to the Tree of Life, but these I regard as temporary, which will disappear as the light of pure truth, and its accompanying purity of life, is manifested: and in this the Dispensation of Spirit differs from all the past, in that it begins—not at the highest, but at the lowest point, and from, apparently, a very feeble commencement.

Higher Broughton, Manchester, December, 1884.

