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‘Reconciliation of Materialism and Spiritualism.’

In your issue of June 20th which has but recently reached me in Canada, ‘Icarus’ has no trouble in overthrowing those attempted explanations of his difficulty which are based on the assumption that the soul or spirit is independent of the body and only uses the latter as its instrument. I have just received the next number, June 27th, containing some more letters in reply to ‘Icarus,’ but it does not appear that he has been answered yet. Though you have closed the correspondence, I trust that you may find room for me, a distant reader, in my endeavour to forward a fuller consideration of the science and philosophy of Spiritualism. What we seem to be most in need of is the formulation of some really definite and intelligible propositions, which might be generally accepted as a basis, or at any rate as a rough outline of the science.

In the same number (June 20th) which contains ‘Icarus’ second letter, there is one from Professor A. R. Wallace, in which he refers to his theory that ‘the individual human spirit is developed in, and by means of, the body and that the mental powers and faculties of the spirit are developed in, and by means of, the brain.’ Here we have something intelligible. If ‘Icarus’ will study Professor Wallace’s theory as propounded in Chapter vii. of ‘Miracles and Modern Spiritualism,’ I think he will find his difficulty answered except in one important respect. He will admit, or ought to admit, that since the spirit is developed in, and by means of, the body, and becomes conscious of itself through the medium of the bodily organisation, it naturally follows that certain functional disturbances of that organisation may temporarily interrupt the self-consciousness of the spirit, which may be again resumed when such disturbance ceases. Further, that if the functional disturbance be sufficiently serious the spirit may be unable again to manifest itself through that organism, which then becomes ‘dead’ and decays.

The question now arises: What, then, becomes of the spirit? To this question Professor Wallace’s chapter gives no intelligible reply. He speaks only of the ‘disembodied spirit’ as leading a new and higher existence. But ‘disembodied spirit’ conveys no meaning that can be grasped by the mind. This is the stumbling-block of ‘Icarus’ and many others, and they are quite right. Something more definite is wanted. The only way that I can see of viewing this subject clearly is to regard ‘spirit’ as a form of Force. It is the highest and most refined of the series of Natural Forces with which we are acquainted, and the science of Spiritualism is the study of this Force and of the laws under which it works.

We all know that Force cannot exist without Matter—this is a self-evident and fundamental law of all the physical forces with which we are acquainted, from gravitation upwards. All must have matter to act upon; and without the presence of matter, Force cannot be conceived to exist. Precisely the same law governs ‘Spirit.’ It is a Force which cannot manifest, cannot be said to exist, without matter to operate upon.

To return then to the question, how does the spirit force which has become individualised and characterised as a ‘human spirit’ dispose of itself when the body which it organised and vivified has become useless? The reply is that it continues to manifest itself in a new and more refined body, and the fact must be insisted upon that this new body is a *material* body—of far finer material than anything that we know of, and possessing powers and qualities of which we have no conception, but still *material*.

Professor Wallace's theory evidently includes a conception of this new body, although no mention of it is made in his chapter on 'The Theory of Spiritualism.' There he speaks only of 'disembodied spirits,' yet in the next chapter, on the 'Moral Teachings of Spiritualism,' he says, 'After death man's spirit survives in an ethereal body gifted with new powers.'

But a mere passing reference like this is not enough, and the word 'ethereal' is too indefinite. The *reality* of the second body—its actual *materiality*—is the very corner stone of any theory which can be comprehended. Spirit cannot manifest except through matter and when it ceases to manifest through the human body as we know it, it continues to manifest through a second body of finer material and giving the spirit more scope for its tremendous powers, but *still a material body*.

Materialism and Spiritualism here find their reconciliation and meeting-ground. The Materialist is perfectly right in declining to let go of his grip on Matter. We cannot possibly

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conceive of any mode of existence which is not based upon matter, however refined it may be. The Spiritualist is equally certain of the existence of something higher than Matter, which he terms Spirit. But he errs fatally when he asserts that Spirit can manifest itself or can have individual consciousness independently of matter. Just as well speak of heat, light, electricity, or any other force operating without any matter to act upon.

The *reality* of the new body is not a mere assumption necessary to form a comprehensible theory. It is constantly taught in communications from the other side. All spirits agree in saying that they inhabit bodies *more* real than their old ones. It exists within the physical body, ready to separate from it on the death of the latter, and clairvoyants can see it separate and depart. If this truth of the substantial reality of the new body is firmly adhered to, together with the truth that 'spirit' is a form of force which cannot manifest, except through matter, most of the confusion which has been apparent in the 'Icarus' correspondence will disappear.

Of course 'Icarus' begs the question when he assumes that the spiritual phenomena are 'opposed to the facts revealed by materialistic science.' They are not opposed to them. They are an extension of them. When any new science is being developed, its facts are apparently opposed to existing science until knowledge becomes sufficiently extended to embrace them.

Hypnotic and psychical research merely touch on the margin of a certain class of phenomena of the mental kind. They show that the incarnate spirit, under certain conditions, possesses peculiar powers which only hint at the greater powers it will possess when it controls the finer second body. Outside of these there remain the whole series of 'physical phenomena' which hypnotic and psychical research do not make the faintest approach to explaining. These phenomena show us the tremendous command over matter possessed by spirit in its higher embodiment.

Bassille.