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THE DISCERNING OF SPIRITS.

A LECTURE BY EMMA HARDINGE.

I PROPOSE to speak of the power existing in the human organism for the discerning of spirits, and that not alone of the disembodied spirits who have passed from the vale of mortality—who, already in the pure and radiant atmosphere of the brighter and the better—the spiritual world, surrounding us as they do, are yet invisible to our eyes; but the power of discerning the spiritual part of all things, the attribute of the human soul, the great fore-glimmering of those vast and boundless powers to which we shall attain when we are no longer peering behind the prison bars of mortality, but behold cause and effect in creation face to face, and realise that the cause is spiritual—the effect alone material. I ask you, therefore, to consider how many of the glimmering lines of phenomenal power that exist amongst us evince—not alone the outward and visible sign of God's workmanship in mere sensuous forms—but assure us of the spiritual part incarnate in matter, that which I call the Soul of Things.

That we may better comprehend the nature of the attribute which I propose to discuss, I shall attempt to classify the powers that exist in man in this direction, by first referring to the very smallest, the most familiar, but still the commonest evidences of the gift as known amongst us, in the form of clairvoyance,—the power of beholding objects at a distance without the ordinary aids of the visual organs,—the power of perceiving character and recognising histories attached to substances by the touch, known amongst us as psychometry—the power of prophecying the future, the capacity of recalling what men call the “dead past.” All these are attributes belonging to the human soul, and they

exist independently of the agency or influence of an invisible disembodied spirit.

All these give us the assurance that our souls have powers which, though masked by the form of matter, when in the bright and glorious transfiguration of a spiritual life, shall make us indeed the image of the Creator, and grant to us some approach to those attributes—if I may so say—of omniscience and omnipotence which must belong to us by our relation to the great Creator. I shall next speak of the powers which enable us to commune by spiritual sight with the world beyond the grave. We are accustomed vaguely to suppose that the powers claimed by the gipsy, the fortune-teller of to-day, the astrologer and the magician of olden times all come under the category of impostures, or else of some peculiar and abnormal faculty, neither intellectual nor spiritual, which is not worth the investigation. In olden times, when Saul the son of Kish sought unto Samuel the seer to discover his father's asses, this power was deemed quite sufficient to stamp upon him who possessed it the title of the "Man of God." It was the having such powers as these that distinguished men in olden times by the sublime name of prophets. To-day the power exists—we know it, we behold it exhibited around us amongst the humblest in society; we employ it either for the purpose of idle curiosity, or, it may be, from the love of the marvellous, or from a desire to penetrate into the hidden things our souls give witness of, but which too often our tongues are ashamed to acknowledge. I repeat, the power exists now. Be pleased to consider the philosophy it involves. What is sight? What is this philosophy of optics which requires the camera obscura of the eye, which demands from the architect of the structure of man the beautiful and curious arrangement of lenses and reflecting apparatus, which after all, when removed from the organism, forms a very curious but very beautiful, model for some of our optical instruments, and has just as little power, when removed from the organism, as the senseless glass by which we detect microscopic or telescopic objects—no more? We know that, in order to use the human eye, and to obtain whatever knowledge it is capable of imparting to us, we require the sensuous object for perception—a radius of vision in which to perceive, an atmosphere to transmit the rays of light; and after all, this radius of vision is just as limited as the conditions of matter require it to be. But in the perception which enabled the seers of old, and the fortune-teller of modern times to discover lost property, to find hidden things, to detect the absent, and to trace the wandering form of the distant, to recall the past, and to penetrate the future, what radius of vision is demanded there? The eye then perceives

through all material obstacles—time is annihilated, the past is recalled, the future is grappled with, the present is dealt with, and becomes as an open page where the spirit traverses creation, and is enabled to penetrate any space, any distance, without any of the ordinary arrangements for perception. You will perceive from this, that there is no analogy between spiritual and material sight. You will recognize, even in this simplest, this humblest form of discerning things, first, that there must be a spiritual power to see. For the clairvoyant does not perceive the outward and material form, except by the outward and material eye. It is obvious, therefore, it is not the external form that is seen, and here is one revelation which the discerning of spirits brings us—all things have a spiritual form. These blossoms (*referring to the flowers in her hand*) shall never die out from the grand and universal totality of the universe. Not alone in the chemistry of their particles, but as they were created in the mind of the Infinite, ages and ages before matter was so arranged as to produce them in their present form, as they were prophesied of when the foundations of this planet were laid, as they were predetermined ere the laws of mineral life were so elaborated as to necessitate the production of vegetable life;—and all this may have been millions of years ago. These blossoms have existed in the divine mind in the eternity from whence they have come. So when the particles of matter have passed away, clairvoyants of distant ages shall behold them wheresoever the links of association can recall the train of causation which enables them to penetrate back to this place and time. Experiments in clairvoyance have proved that whatsoever has existed can always be reproduced to the mind of the clairvoyant. You may say that this requires the action of the mind of the magnetiser, the operator; but in half the cases of lucidity or good clairvoyance there is no operator present. In many of the cases of clairvoyance, the person who enquires has not the previous knowledge of where to find, or even how fully to describe the person or the thing sought for; and when information is thus rendered, by what means is it given? Have we never considered that the clairvoyant must perceive something? We find a vague, though beautiful philosophy extant, that all things are daguerrotyped in the air, and that the vast laboratory of air around us receives the impress of all we say and all we do, and of all forms that exist; and that in this a clairvoyant can recall all that has been done. Do they mean to tell us that the clairvoyant can recall a nothing? Something must be there ere the clairvoyant perceives the object; therefore we believe that, investigated in its philosophical rather than its mere phenomenal character, even the humblest manifestation of clairvoyance—the power of discovering

hidden things, searching out lost property, recalling the past, and telling, as it is called, the history of the "Long Ago," all is evidence—aye! and evidence conclusive—that histories and things, and acts and deeds have all left an indelible record upon creation. Somewhere they exist, and the power of discerning this something is that which we call "clear-sight," or "clairvoyance."

We next point to the manifestation called psychometry. We ask you to remember if you have ever beheld any exhibitions of this phenomenal power, and do not now dismiss the subject with "It is very strange or curious;" but be pleased to recollect the philosophy here involved. We discover character by the touch, but not alone character. It is well understood now, that to the good psychometrist, the touch of any substance will recall, not alone the human character with which it has been connected, but will recall, if it be a fossil, the scene, the time, and the circumstances under which that fossil was deposited. Experiments of this kind have been practised in lands where modern Spiritualism is not deemed merely a gratification of the hour, not sought after merely for the amusement of the time or the personal information on some subject or point gratifying to the enquirer, but where it is sought and studied as a science of soul. It is recognized by numerous experiments, that by the touch, a susceptible psychometrist can discover the history of all things with which that touch comes in contact. Experiments of this kind have proved that of a hundred various substances, a good psychometrist with a very few failures, each one of which proves a part of the philosophy, can recall the mystery of the life of that object, the persons connected with it, and the history through which it has passed.*

Pause here, and consider what this power of discerning spirits involves. First, I repeat, it involves the necessity of a spiritual part of all things, of a spiritual life in all things—because it is not by the mere touch of matter that you can discern more of the substance than the quality of matter. Place this in the hands of such a psychometrist, and what hidden things shall not be revealed? The mask of humanity shall drop, the secret thought, the hidden purpose, the mystery of character, are all impressed on the substance and revealed by the touch. Oh! pause before it. Supposing this power to become universal—supposing that these experiments in psychometry should be as they have proved, susceptible of cultivation by practice, and humanity to deem it worthy of study—by practice to acquire

* In evidence of this see Denton's book—*The Soul of Things*, some account of which will be found in No. 9, Vol. v., of the *Spiritual Magazine*.—Editor.

this power, what will be the result? The very stones will prate of our whereabouts. We enter the house of guilt now, and we feel the impress of wrong and evil upon us. We enter the presence of the hypocrite, and all his smooth speech and wiles fail utterly to mask the dark heart that is prompting him. We enter the presence of the humble and good—those who pass through life unnoticed and unknown—and we feel the aroma of an angel entertained unawares. We enter into the dwelling where some saint presides in human form and, we know not why, repose and a holy tranquillity steal over us. In all our dealings with one another these monitions are perpetually present, and they pass by us unheeded as the familiar routine of daily life. Investigate them, and you discover a portion of the power of the soul for the discerning of spirits, the extreme action of which is what I have spoken of as psychometry, or the power of discerning spirits by the touch. I again remind you that this power is growing, that it is susceptible of cultivation in practice, and that if it should become as He in whom some of you believe, has promised, the power by which all that is hidden shall be made manifest, and all that is secret shall come abroad; oh, what a revelation will be amongst us! Farewell to the mask of seeming. Mankind will be transformed when we all possess the power of discerning spirits. We are growing to this; and I believe that this power, whilst it is an inevitable attribute of the human soul, is beginning in this day of the science of mind, to become triumphant over matter. I call it now to your attention to show that it is an attribute of the human soul, and that it proves that which some of you men of science have yet failed to discover—the soul of things.

You say that this substance is held together by what you call attraction—that when the atoms become old they decay, crumble apart, and the thing is dead. It is not so. The spiritual part once born into matter lives for ever; it is the spiritual part of all things in the past that forms the houses, the dwellings, the scenery, the landscape of the spirit-world, the spheres that interpenetrate this earth, and it is this that the clairvoyant perceives. It is by this that nothing is really hidden, and that those who have the power of discovering spirits can track your whereabouts. You ask wherefore this power is not more manifest, and if it be possessed, as I have said, amongst Spiritualists and mediums, why the great good God has not bestowed it universally upon all mankind, as a protection against crime, as a revelator of guilt, as the transfigurator of the hypocrite? I answer you, we have been groping through the sciences of matter, we have been struggling upwards through the rudimental ages, merely with the knowledge of the external

and the proven. We are to-day standing in the dawn of the science of mind, and the first way by which we shall grasp at the knowledge of spiritual things is through the study of the science of magnetism, which is the connecting link between body and spirit, the clothing of the spirit, the innermost part of the body, the spiritual part of St. Paul, the mystic substance that passes from out of everything, that leaves its impress on every substance that man touches, and that preserves the form of everything intact in a spiritual existence when the material has passed away.

I pass on to other attributes of the human soul. I propose now to speak of the gift of second sight—so the term is used; we had better call it by the generic title of clear sight. What is the phenomenon which distinguishes what is called the power of second sight? It is usually that of perceiving by a pictorial representation in the atmosphere some scene transpiring at a distance, or some scene prophetic of that which is to come. It is a mere phenomenon, it is something very strange, says the man of science, always provided that it is proved as a fact. We cannot go over the ground and the facts of history to prove them: we prove them when they occur; they are facts in the experience of those who are credible witnesses; if they are not, they are never handed down from one generation to another as facts. I give credit to the Architect of Creation for disposing of falsehood, dissipating error, and paying the wages of sin or imperfection by death in all forms. I believe that the same wise Providence has ordained that the beautiful shall never die, that the true is immortal, that the good is eternal, and never perishes. When I find a succession of facts permeating the ages and reproduced in every part of the known world, without possible chance of collusion amongst nations, and times, and peoples, I give more credit to the universal attribute of truth in their nature than to require to substantiate the facts of the ages again and again for the satisfaction of those who are not philosophers enough to understand that truth forms the silver thread upon which history is strung.

The power of beholding visions, allegorical, representative, and prophetic visions, has existed in all times, and is one of the gifts or attributes of the power of discerning spirits. It involves, indeed, another set of causes, and carries us up from the attributes of the soul unaided—from the powers of the mind peering through the veil of matter, but standing alone, to the agency of the disembodied spirit. When we behold a prophetic or allegorical picture full of intelligence, where is the painter? The air does not group itself into the form; the mind of the seer does not originate it. Whatsoever object is

presented, if it be an allegorical picture of a fact or prophetic of a truth, is then recorded, not else; and these records prove the facts, and prove also that a painter has been at work somewhere. This picture involves the inevitable agency of a disembodied spirit. Were there but one testimony in the history of mankind, and that well accredited, of second sight,—were there but one manifestation of the power of the human eye to behold, painted in the invisible air, or on the canvas of ether, any allegorical scene that should represent a fact, or any prophetic picture that was realised,—that alone would be sufficient to prove that an intelligent mind had produced the vision, and that some power exists in the human mind to perceive spiritually rather than materially; we therefore, now rise from the earth, wherein our souls possess certain attributes of clear sight, to the dawning of another world. We make a footstep on the boundary of another world, and we stand in the presence of an intelligent, controlling, though invisible artist, who, whether by psychological power impressing our minds, or actually daguerreotyping on the air the picture or vision presented, is at work, and is the agent for the production of that vision. Here is another revelation which the power of discerning spirits produces. I need not remind the Bible student that this was one of the most marked attributes of the prophets and seers of old.

We now come to modern days, and when we find the same attribute existing, and existing generally under special conditions, such as the clear air of high mountains, the rarefied atmosphere of cold wintry regions—when we realize that the persons who behold these visions or appearances are generally peculiarly sensitive, even somnambulist, and often giving manifestations of those peculiarities which we now call spirit mediumship; we perceive a line of philosophy in the whole of these manifestations extending from the earth onward to the world beyond, and proving the links between our souls and the mysterious beings who are agents in presenting us these pictures. They tell us that by the aid of the solar spectrum we can discover minerals in the atmosphere of the sun by experiments precisely similar to those which test the quality of minerals of our own earth. Oh, what a grand leap science has here made! how many thousands and millions of miles have we climbed into the vast infinity of space until we stand in the presence of the solar chemists, and can tell them as much of the composition of their vast and wonderful luminary almost as we can of our own earth. By the same set of analogies here, with all our wonderful faculties climbing hither and thither through the crust of matter, and manifesting powers of which they scarcely dream as

attributes of the human soul, connecting with these the powers brought from the spirit-world, we first perceive how strictly human are the ministering spirits who are about us and who control us; and next, how strictly spiritual are the powers within us, the motive powers which we so vaguely call life and soul. This is another revelation of the power of discerning spirits.

I now pass on to those still higher revelations by which we are enabled to discern the forms of the angels, the blessed departed, the power of beholding what we call the spectre or apparition of the deceased. Amongst those powers is one which I must not omit to name, that enables us to behold the spectre or apparition of the living. We know that by the same array of facts we have grouped round spiritual phenomena in every age, the spirit of the living is beheld on earth. Various attempts have been made to account for the mystery of the double-goer. It has even been hinted that a duplicate of ourselves exists somewhere in the surrounding air—that in the regions of space some mysterious familiar, something analogous perhaps to the *daimon* of Socrates—some re-duplication of ourselves, partly intelligent and partly dependent upon mind from without, appears from time to time and manifests itself now in the form of the wraith, and more lately in that of the living spirit. I offer you that which I believe to be the truth on this point—you must compare it with your own experience ere you accept it as a judgment worthy of being accredited. I have already pointed to the fact that by psychometry you discover character. You must therefore infer that there is passing from out yourselves every moment an aroma imponderable; but still an aroma charged with your character, that this, which is vaguely called the sphere, by which you mysteriously recognize and understand each other, by which attractions, repulsions, affections, antipathies, group society together in kindreds—that all this mysterious emanation passing from out of yourselves, and proved in psychometry to be charged with your character is something of a substance, is in fact material, although you do not behold it, and though it is not sensitive to the touch or to any of the outward sensations, but only appeals to the spiritual nature of the psychometrist. Here is one step again: it is proved that a portion of yourself, and of your character, does pass from out of you. We have spoken before of the philosophy of the haunted house, and we conceive that this is a place where we may remind you again of that which we claim to be the explanation of the singular phenomena of hauntings. We mention it because it is applicable to this point of our subject. We find that in nearly every well-attested case of a spiritual mani-

festation attaching to a place, some violent death has either taken place there, or some evil mind has poured out the strong magnetism of its affection upon some objects or scene in that place. For instance, the miser, although life may be extended for him to extreme old age, has day by day, and night by night, given off of his love, his dearest affections to the heap of shining metal which he treasures up in some secret corner. If our character—our affections, wishes and proclivities attach involuntarily to every substance we touch, when we project them with all the strong and passionate mind which any great vice or strong purpose of the soul induces;—when we concentrate them, as in the case I have quoted, in one particular direction, does not a larger charge of the magnetism, and a stronger force of the will propel magnetism in that direction? I would pause here and remind the man of crime, or the man of worldly loves or material affections—the sensualist or the gambler, the drunkard or the miser,—any soul that binds itself in the chains of its own vices in strong attraction to the earth;—that he is forging and hammering chains to bind his spirit to the place and thing he loves. He becomes as a spirit enclosed in the prison-house of his own crime; he is compelled by the spiritual and magnetic attraction back to the place as surely as the needle is drawn to the loadstone. He has poured out the oil of magnetism either on the objects of his vice, or the place of his love, or the things of his affection, and that forms an attractive point that drags back the fettered spirit until the magnetism is worn out, and the spirit soars away by the attraction of newer and higher objects from the scene of its earthly tendencies. In the case of violent death—a still more marked evidence of magnetic attraction presents itself. In those who are violently deprived of life, the magnetic principle is poured out with the life-blood. The broken casket is still full of the precious fountain of life, and this distributed around, as inevitably attaches to the place where it is wasted, as our magnetism in part attaches to substances;—it is still a part of the psychometry which I have spoken of. The large charge of the life-principle thus poured out becomes an attractive bond to the spirit. Here it not only returns, but even if distant, its thought is there, and its thought and its magnetism help to make the manifestations that are produced in that place, and always repeat the dark tragedy—the tale of crime. As that was the last thought of the dying, as it was the one strong psychological point which closed up the gates of life, so it is the one strong psychological point through which the returning spirit enters again. Therefore it is that the dire tragedy, the loss of life, which is generally enacted, or the repetition of the miser's love,

or of the sensualist's voice, or tone, or habits—or whatsoever man has loved and thought of most strongly, the last great and mighty act of life imprinted, as in the case of murder or violent death, on the departing soul, becomes inevitably re-enacted in the place which is charged with the magnetism of the departed. This philosophy we might bring to bear even upon the living spirit, and its manifestation or apparition of which I have spoken. Wherever such manifestations are made, the subject of them invariably gives off that magnetic force which constitutes him a medium. I do not realise that there is any separate existence perceived; it is but the magnetism which is represented in the form of a person—that form is not intelligent, it is not a separate existence from the person, it is merely a portion of his magnetism, which departs in moments of abstraction, of sleep, of dream, of some condition of mind when the whole spirit does not fully possess and use the magnetism; then, and then only, is the living spirit seen. The manifestation is not a strange one when we remember the philosophy of psychometry, and that wheresoever we pass, our magnetism is attaching to all substances and things around us. It would not be difficult for the eye of the seer to behold in this chamber the forms of those who have been present, and the receptions, through their magnetism, still attaching to the place, even of their life and character. The whole of these manifestations require for their elucidation the study of that magnetism which I have so often commended to the philosophers who have grouped together here, as the true foundation of psychological science.

I now pass to the consideration of the apparition of the disembodied. The spectre which appeared at the moment when the soul departed from the body, was, in former times, deemed one of the most common manifestations of this kind. Innumerable instances of these manifestations have occurred, and still occur, to those who have not been favoured with a vision of spiritual life. At such a moment to the soul that is not informed of spiritual life the transition into the world of spirits is often strange and startling. We do not enter the golden heaven of theology at the onset; we are not at once launched into the presence of rejoicing saints and triumphant archangels, according to the pictorial fancies of the theologian, but we are in a living, real, and practical sphere of existence—where life is continued from the point at which we drop it here. Now, this being the case, the first thought of many and many an awakened spirit is astonishment to find their life so real, so earnest, so tangible, so thoroughly in accordance with the life from which they have departed; and in this manifestation the memory of earth being strong and themselves not yet risen

to the Father, by which I mean not fully entered into the spiritual sphere, their apparition, strongly charged with that magnetic life that is departed, may readily be seen. It is not always seen by those to whom they would willingly present themselves. It is frequently questioned why strangers have beheld the forms of the departed rather than those who best loved them. Men have asked, "Should not the love of my heart present itself to me, rather than to those unsympathetic strangers?" We need but remind you, that the spirit or apparition of the departed can only manifest itself where the power of seership exists, and that with those who love best, with all the tenderness of affection and all the longing yearning once more to behold the form of the beloved,—if the physical magnetic and spiritual gift of discerning spirit is not there, God's laws are never transcended; it is the seer alone that beholds the spirit under any circumstances.

We next consider by what means your eyes—spirit mediums, behold the forms of the departed. And in this respect we remind you again that your material eye can only behold sensuous objects; that the entire capacity of the beautiful and curious structure of the human eye can never take cognizance of aught that is not in material form. What you behold is not matter, and, therefore, you see not with the outer eye. Your outer eye, the window of the soul, may be opened, but the soul looks not through it. The spiritual eye alone can behold the spiritual form, howsoever it be presented. That is the first proposition I make concerning the power of observing the forms of the departed; the next is as to the process by which the spirit actually presents itself to the eye of the seer. There are many processes, but in almost all cases such manifestations are made by the act of psychology. The spirit wills the manifestation; the psychologist knows that his subject perceives through his sense, beholds through his will; the psychologist wills his subject to behold whatsoever form his mind conceives, and the subject perceives it. Even so, the form perceived by the spiritual subject or medium is nothing but a psychological presentation. Aye, and this explains, says the man of science, all the hallucinations which men call apparitions. Not quite. Where is the psychologist? There must be some one, some mind, some intelligence to present the psychological picture—some intelligence that knows that the psychological picture will be recognized—some intelligence to fashion it, some one to represent the garments of earth, the living gait, the dull ear, the blind eye, the crippled form, the specialties of those who have long since passed away; the representation of which forms such conclusive evidence of identity, and has brought so many joyful recognitions of the

immortality of the soul to thousands who have heard of the spectre and apparition with scoff and ridicule, until the form of the long-ago said to be hidden in the grave, crumbling in the dust, or sleeping until the judgment-day, has been represented before the eye of the seer, and all the psychological memories of it re-produced. This is the means by which garments that clothe the spirit are re-produced—by which the old forms that have perished out of all material existence are shewn again. We have heard the question asked with sneer and scoff within this very chamber, from whence do the spirits procure these garments? Were we inhabitants of another planet we might question where the inhabitants of this procured their garments. We should find that they are adaptations from the world around us; that they are material; of the same component parts that clothe our viewless spirit, formed of the atoms of the planet on which we live, the chemistry of which is as much found in this substance (of dress) as in this hand. Both originate, perhaps, from the combination of hydrogen and oxygen gas; both these combinations are sufficient to produce a world, and the chemist knows it; and all the varieties we behold around us are but modifications of the atoms of matter. Do we suppose that this, our planet, is the only existence in creation—the only world, the only form of substance, or the only subject of the great chemistry of the universe? Be assured, that wheresoever we live, whatsoever atmosphere surrounds us, the world in which we live, the elements that are about us, are as much under God's providential care there as here, and that we shall as surely realize all the attributes that are necessary for our existence there as here. Do we fall out of the hands of God by passing from this sphere, or must we leave it to fall into them? If His majesty and His power, and His laws and His prescience, and His wisdom are sufficient for us here; by analogy, they are sufficient for us though we traverse worlds, suns, systems—the roads and bye-ways of eternity. He is everywhere, and so He clothes His spirits with the substances of the world around them. But the powers of spiritual existences are so much larger, so much wider, and grander than those of this world, that we dwell fondly upon the power of mind to re-habilitate itself, even in the garments of thought. This psychological power, which we merely regard as an experiment to amuse the hour—this biological power by which the mind of the operator can compel the mind of the subject to behold any actual, tangible form, accompanies the spirit, and by this same biological power the spirit wills to be represented in that form and habit, that custom and appearance that will best recall the identities of earth. That is one mode by which the spirit presents itself again to man.

There are yet others ; and the next that we shall notice, is the more tangible form that appeals to the touch. We all know that there are manifestations amongst us, far too well and credibly witnessed to be questioned now, by which substances are produced —by which for some temporary purpose substances, seemingly of the human form, of garments and other material objects, are produced and become manifest to the touch. We ask by what possible power can an invisible spirit thus re-produce the atoms of matter? Permit me to ask if you have ever beheld in some of the laboratories of chemistry vast arrangements made for containing what the vulgar would call nothing? The chemist will tell you that *this* vessel contains some substance and *that* another. You behold nothing but the clear ether ; yet these jars, or receptacles, are full of gaseous substances, invisible to your eyes. Let sparks of electricity be passed through these, and you behold them at once in the shape of substances, in the shape of drops of water, and yet further, of crystallized atoms. From the viewless air, the chemist can produce the solid, hard mass known as crystal. Not the lack of knowledge, but the lack of power—of man's capacity to grasp the elemental keys that open all space to him ; merely from such a lack of power as this do we fail to be able to recompose a world by chemistry. We can produce in the laboratory of the chemist all the various phenomena which carry matter from the most sublimated gas up to the hardest form of the solid. Perhaps the chemistry of the cold marble sarcophagus crushes out this knowledge! Perhaps man is less wise in the world beyond the grave than he is here! Perhaps the great Architect of creation can only reveal Himself and His laws upon this world, and not in spirit-land! If we reverse this picture, and assume that God's laws are eternal here and everywhere, that the knowledge we obtain here is but a preparation for the broader vistas of perception hereafter ;—if we understand that the soul and spirit is the man and not the dead form—that the spirit sleeps not in the ground—that the spirit goes not down into the grave—that the spirit still lives, though the form perishes, we shall understand that all the attributes of the spirit pass with it to the life beyond the grave, and that spiritual chemists and spiritual philosophers, sages, seers, master minds of every age in the grand broad liberty of the land of light, and the land of causes, are better chemists and better philosophers than they were here, and that it is by the aid of such knowledge, by the power to accomplish results in immeasurably short periods of time ; by the power to realize, as it were by magic (because invisible to you) the same chemical processes which they perform on earth, that spirits can form round the hand, or about the spirit-form such substances as will, for a short space of time, appear

to be solid and substantial. That they cannot continue these substances, or their life, that they are not permanent, is merely a deficiency of their chemistry. Perhaps it will never be given to the will of man, so to organize the atoms of matter round a spiritual form as to produce a living envelope. There is a mystery in it which the spirit has not yet entered—a seal which he has not yet broken, and that is the mystery of life. Unlike Prometheus, we cannot steal the fire of life from heaven and animate it. We are but poor fragmentary finite imitators of the Creator; and, therefore, spirits can do no more than reproduce fragmentary evidence of chemical power to aggregate substance. They cannot put the life into it: that is the mystery of God. Nevertheless, doing thus much you will realize that another of the powers of the gift of discerning spirits enables us to go further than the power of vision; by that of touch we realise that there are attributes possible to the disembodied spirit, and, therefore, possible to us, of which we know not. What the soul disembodied can do, our souls can achieve when we do but possess the knowledge.

The last of the powers that belong to this gift, which I may now notice, is that of beholding the soul in its home of light and bliss. Happily for the true balance and equilibrium necessary for the spirit while it yet lives in matter, this power is yet limited to vision. We may not with mortal eye, we may not even with our pure spiritual eye, separate from the body, behold the forms of life and the glorious blossoms of life which spring out of the ashes of this material form—for, could we behold these, all our senses would so follow that of sight that we should fail to realise the beauty, the use and glory of this poor dull earth again. It is only ecstasy that can realise the glory of the life beyond, but fore-gleams of immortality, flashes of light from Paradise, and wafts from the fragrance of the blossoms of eternity do come in soft breathings, and low whispers, and gleams of light, falling across our darkened way, and now and then a vision of the bright and glorious home of beauty which God has destined for his struggling pilgrims, gladdens the eye of the seer. And, oh! what a glorious presentation it is. What a sunlight, to which this shadowy earth of ours is but the eventide—or, at best, night illuminated by the stars of God's providence and blessing. We have never seen daylight yet—we are still in the darkness, and ere the liberty-angel, Death, shall open the gates of life for us it is not well we should comprehend, (except by the revelations of your mediums, the footprints of the boundaries of both worlds) that there is such a glorious reality in store for us; and, when the forms of the beautiful, the bright, the glorious, and the risen are thus perceived, there

are transfigurations also realised which it is not well for us to inquire into. We perceive there so many strange changeful operations of spiritual life that we could not comprehend them; we cannot leap beyond our shadows; we can take no step in advance of our knowledge; the instruments, the modes, the occupations, the growth of instruction, the means of progress, are all so vastly in advance of our experiences that we can but hope and trust, and faithfully work up to them. But every revelation brings us the same assurance of eternal wisdom and eternal goodness—the fitness of all things, the adaptation of all means to ends. The deeper we search into the volume of spiritual life, the more we consider the power of discerning spirits, and the gifts and the revelation which this power has brought to us, the more surely do we realise that it is well with us, and that we are safe—very safe—in the hands of the Infinite One. How supreme is that goodness that cares for the darkest criminal! For, oh! the discerning of spirits in the land of darkness, as well as of light, brings hope with it. There is movement even there—there is life there—there is struggle there—there is effort there. The fire of passion is burning out, the darkness of crime is expending itself on itself. The creator of his own ill is realising the work he has done, and the thing he has made of himself. In the transfiguration of death one of the grandest and most glorious attributes of the soul is self-knowledge—the perception of the true causes; and, therefore, in the case of the dark and evil spirits the undeveloped and the criminal, the passions which he has indulged, and the habits with which he has bound himself, and the chains with which he has manacled his soul down to the earth—all this brings so much teaching with it, brings such bitter remorse, such an agonising realisation of Milton's piteous cry of the fallen angel, "Me miserable!" Yet, with all this, there is such a perpetual strife for happiness—happiness is such a goal for the soul, the longing to be blessed, the effort to live and ascend is so inevitable, even to the darkest mind, even to the most miserable prisoner of crime, that the turning point must come at last, and the gift of the discerning of spirits has never been bestowed upon the seer in vain: for, whilst he beholds the darkness visible, the cloud of thick night that clusters round the soul, outworked from its own miserable heart, he perceives how surely that misery and that very wretchedness is becoming the tutor to the soul to stretch out its hands in the appeal, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

I may not dwell further upon this point. The gift of discerning spirits is so full of instruction; it is so rife with teaching; first concerning the glorious faculties of the human soul—it brings to us such assurance that there are properties of

soul yet unwrought, that there is a grand mine of science yet to be worked, and yet to be systematised and developed, in this new day of mental dawn and illumination, that I pause upon it with delight, and point to it, not as a mere marvel, not as an evidence of phenomenal power, but as an evidence of what we shall be, what we may be, and what an era we have entered upon when we can recognize these powers no longer as miracle, or magic, or hallucination, or folly, but as actualities which we must deal with, which we must cultivate and which we must investigate. Thus much, therefore, for the knowledge which it brings to us of ourselves—for the revelation which it gives us of the presence of a spiritual world about us—of the ministry of angels, of the marvellous love of the Infinite, who has related us not only to the spirits of the departed, but by the aid of the inspiration that is brought to them of broader vistas, the inspiration by which they drink in the light of arch-angelic worlds, has connected us with grand and glorious spheres of which now we only dream: but they are all there. We cannot aspire too high, we cannot hope too much, we cannot dream too brightly of the glorious path of light on which we enter when first we realize the true nature and attribute of soul, when once we realize what a grand and glorious thing life is, through the discerning of spirits.

THE OLD KITCHEN IN THE ROYAL PALACE AT CINTRA.—Mrs. Sullivan, the daughter of Wordsworth, in her *Journal of a Few Months' Residence in Portugal*, speaking of the strange old kitchen of the Royal Palace at Cintra, says:—"One of our party tried the effect of a flute in this kitchen. It was strange and delightful. The softness, the power, the growing swell of notes meant to be soft and subdued, and the reverberation, louder and yet sweeter than the notes themselves, was almost awful, for it gave the delicate flute the character of an organ played by a wizard. The player, however, was soon obliged to leave off; it shook his nerves so that he could hardly stand. When he was afterwards rallied on his faintness, he declared that the reverberation thrilled him intolerably, and that the flute itself had got a sudden life in it, so that after a few minutes he seemed himself to be rather the thing played upon than the player." (Vol. II., p. 55.)
