

## Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

**TRUTH COURTS INVESTIGATION.** We call attention to the following paper, written by our Brother Rand, the Missionary to the Micmac Indians, who is now on a visit to this City, and will be happy to converse with any individual upon this subject. It is certainly handled in a different light to any we have seen before.

We do not, however, hold ourselves responsible for the opinion of our Brother Rand, or any other Correspondent.—Eds.

## Spirit Rappings.

**Messrs. Editors.**—I have lately had an opportunity of examining those mysterious performances, which have made so much noise in the world, under the appellation which heads this article. Having read carefully the articles lately published in the *Visitor*, in connection with the account given me by a friend some time ago, who had witnessed the operation, I had come to the conclusion that it is probably the work of the devil, and that it would be very improper to "seek to it" as to an oracle. In fact, I do not know as I could have consented to witness it, had the impression of Satanic agency not been previously removed.

But a short time ago I was at Shediac, and remained a few days with a Brother who resides there. I found, to my surprise, that he and his family were all "Mediums," and that the "Rappings" had caused a great deal of excitement there during the past winter, and at also the Bend; there being many "mediums" at each of these places. My brother had come to the conclusion that it is some natural agency that produces the "raps," though what it is, and in what way it operates, he could not tell. Having listened to his statements and arguments, I was led to believe that he was upon the right track in his investigations, and that there could be no sin nor harm in witnessing the performance. I came to the investigation very calm. I witnessed it several times, and tried a number of experiments to test the truth of the statements made by others, and I feel it not only my duty, but my privilege, to lay before the public several facts, of which no notice has been taken in any of the dissertations which I have read upon the subject. It may be as well to notice the process somewhat in detail.

1st. And first I would state, that I am fully persuaded that it is not deception, nor mere sleight of hand, on the part of the operators, or "mediums," as they are termed. I was well acquainted with the parties which I saw perform. I am sure that neither my brother nor my nieces would attempt to deceive me. They could have no motive to do so. They were not turning it to any account, nor did they intend to do so, for gain or any other purpose. And if they had desired to deceive me, they could not have done so. I repeatedly put the questions to the table myself, speaking in Micmac, of which language they knew nothing, and could not therefore tell what the questions were; yet were the answers given with unerring precision, and promptness. In fact, all who have investigated the matter carefully, have abandoned the ground that the rappings are the work of fraud.

2d. There is something very mysterious about it. A number of persons,—there should be as many as four,—sit down around a table, and place their hands upon it. After waiting a few minutes, one of them says, "If there are any spirits in the room, let the table rap." If no sound is heard, the question is repeated. Presently a slight rap is heard distinctly, as though it proceeded from the middle of the wood of the table, more like the falling of a drop of rain than any thing else I could compare it to. It is repeated at the word of command, and it raps just as often as told to. "Rap louder," says the "medium." It raps louder. "Rap three times." It raps three times. And just where it is told to rap, it raps. "Now, then, if the spirit will answer a few questions, let the table tip towards me." Instantly the table, as though instinct with life, tips over in the direction indicated. Questions are then put, to which the answers "yes" and "no" will be appropriate, and the table is commanded to do this, or do that, as an indication of assent or dissent.

I thus ascertained that there were no specific moves or signs for "yes" and "no," to which the spirits adhere always and invari-

ably; but they "rap," or "tip," or "shake their heads," or "rise up on two feet and come down with force," or "rock to and fro," or "stamp," &c. &c., just at the caprice of the commanding "medium."

But it can answer questions of another kind. An individual, a total stranger to the "mediums," lays his hands on the table, in conjunction with theirs, and says, "Now tell me how old I am, and I will believe there is something in it." "Count off this gentleman's age," says the "medium." The table instantly rocks from side to side, striking the floor with its two feet, thumping once for every year, until the number is told off. The startled enquirer, who has, perhaps, suspected the whole thing as a mere trick, finds that it has told him correctly. In this way it will answer any question of number.

But it can do more than this. "Spell," said I "the name of my wife." "When I mention the first letter of aunt's name," says one of the "mediums," "let the table tip." Then beginning with A, she repeated the letters of the alphabet until she came to J, when instantly the table "tipped." The process was repeated until the word, JANE, was spelled off.

Some of the most amusing performances which I witnessed, was an attempt to imitate the noise and motions of men, animals, and things. "Shew us how the French women rock their children." The table immediately rocked with a gentle motion, not making the least noise. "Shew us how Mrs. So and So rocks her child." "Thump, thump, thump, thump," goes the table, as if it would knock a hole through the floor. "Are you displeased? then stamp and shake your head." Several times I witnessed its uncouth and awkward attempts to shew displeasure and spite, by "shaking its head and stamping furiously."

"Is the spirit of King William the Third present?" enquired my brother. His Majesty's presence was announced, ready to do our biddings. After a number of enquiries of equal importance, he was requested to illustrate the manner in which his charger leaped up the banks of the Boyne, on the day of the memorable battle. Instantly, the table reared up upon its "hind legs," and leaped forward quite in the style of the horse, upon which his Majesty generally appears mounted, when we see his picture; of which we were all probably thinking at the time.

I was informed that the table would dance, when requested, and that in this very unspiritual exercise, it would imitate the motions of any individual mentioned.

The reader will admit that this is all wonderful enough, and he will not wonder, and I will not wonder, if he think it would add not a little to the strength of his belief, to be an eye witness. And I confess that were it not for the fact that hundreds of creditable witnesses are ready to attest to the same things, I should be something like the Irish emigrant who would not write to his friends that he got "mate" oftener than twice a week, since he "wanted to be beloved."

3d. The question arises—How is all this done? Is it the work of departed spirits? or, is it the work of the Devil? or, is it the result of some unknown natural agent, analogous to electricity, or magnetism, by which the minds and wills of men can controul inanimate matter? The latter is my own opinion, most decidedly. I proceed to give the facts upon which this opinion is founded. Whether they disprove the theory which ascribes the rappings to disembodied spirits, good or bad, the reader must judge. Meanwhile every fact that can be ascertained respecting it, will be considered important by every person who would carefully investigate the matter.

1st. There is something so profoundly ridiculous in the idea, that the spirits of the departed have nothing better to employ themselves about, than to run hither and thither at the nod and beck of a "medium"—some silly little girl it may be,—that they will come and dance and caper, answer the most ridiculous questions, and cut up all sorts of shames, for the amusement of a company of young people, who, to say the least, might often be better employed, that one revolts at it. My whole theory of the other world must be changed entirely, before I can believe it for a moment. Only think of the Spirit of William the Third, coming to show us how his horse jumped! or the Duke of Wellington, to show us what kind of a noise a cannon makes! I know not how others are impressed, but for

my own part I could not help exclaiming, "Nay, these are not the pranks of departed spirits!" And in fact we got an answer just as readily, when the Medium said, "If there are any cats present, let them rap," as we did when "spirits" were invoked. But I do not rest the argument on this; but—

2d. The answers are often false and contradictory. And here is a point to which I would call special attention. What is known by the "mediums" or the parties present, the "spirit" knows, and he knows nothing more. What you know to be true, they will tell you with unerring certainty, provided you keep your thoughts upon it at the time. But if you mistake in the number of your children, or the years of your age, the "spirit" makes the same mistake. This, my brother, assures me, he has proved by innumerable examples; and this proves to me that the spirits which controul the thing, are those still inhabiting houses of clay. Beyond what you know already, or what is known to some of the parties, you can get no certain intelligence. All is uncertainty, bungling guess-work. The answers often hit right; they just as often hit wrong. This annihilates its use as an oracle. If it be the devil, or evil angels under his control, as some gravely assert, then must he be a much weaker, sillier devil, than the Bible represents him. I would not, indeed, deny the abstract proposition that the "devil is the greatest fool in creation." Still, "we are not ignorant of his devices." And if the "Spirit Rappings" be his work, intended to lead men to trust to his lies, and to lead them astray, why should he allow himself to be outwitted, and the whole thing brought into contempt, by giving false answers to questions which he might just as well answer correctly? and the falsity of which are instantly apparent?

Allow me to illustrate. The first time I witnessed it, I did not lay my hands upon the table, and to almost every question I proposed, I received incorrect answers. It told my age correctly, for the "mediums" knew how old I was. It spelled my wife's name correctly, for every one present knew her name to be "Jane." It decided that "uncle" is a very good man, for my affectionate, amiable nieces, firmly believe this. It decided that I had money in my pocket, for they supposed this to be the case. "But now tell me," said I, "what kind of money is in my purse." I told them there is but one kind, and the spirit declared it was silver. "Try again," said I, "you are wrong this time." It next declared it was paper. Well, "the third time is the trying time," and the third time it guessed right; it said it was gold.

Now an "oracle," a "spirit," be he bad or be he good, ought not to have made such a blundering piece of work as this. I cannot doubt that the devil or any other spirit, could have easily found out that I had two sovereigns in my purse. True, the purse was made of leather, and firmly clasped; but if a spirit cannot know what is under lock and key, of what use is it to consult him on any matter? Any fool could tell me what kind of coin was in my pocket, as readily and correctly as the "Spirit Rappers" did. And nearly every question I asked, which was not known to those whose hands were on the table, was answered incorrectly.

And afterwards, when I became more acquainted with it, I could controul the answer myself, and make it rap at the wrong letter, or number, by simply thinking of that instead of the right one. This is mysterious, and inexplicable, I admit. How the table obeyed my volition I cannot say. But this is not the question now under consideration. It is the fact alone that we are dealing with. And I contend, that if the table answered in obedience to my will, "yes" or "no," or "rapped" at the letter to which my mind was directed, then the communication was from me, and not from a departed spirit. And several mediums assured me that they often made it give just such answers as they chose, by simply directing their thoughts to the answer they desired.

Thus I allowed them to spell correctly the given name of one of the companions and friends of my youth. My hands were on the table, and I fixed my mind upon the correct letter each time. But now my young friend's curiosity was excited, and they determined to get hold of the other name. I let them try. The name did not begin with O, so I fixed my thoughts upon that letter. The real letter was passed without notice, but as soon as the letter O was reached, thump came the table with great gravity, and went on putting

consonants together in such confusion, that the mediums gave up in despair. They could not make the name out.

I was informed that among the questions often put by those who came to test the reality of the thing—whatever it be—would be the following—"How old am I?" Answer generally correct. "How many children have I?" Answer correct. "How many boys or girls?" Correct again. By this time the man feels assured that it can tell him anything. Expecting daily an addition to the little group, the anxious father eagerly enquires,—"Will it be a boy or a girl?" and he is sure to be told that it will be the one or the other. He goes home knowing all about it. The event transpires, and lo! the "lying spirit!" It said it would be a boy, and it is a girl! I was assured that the answers to questions of that nature, and to all questions relating to future or uncertain events, turn out incorrect as often as correct. If this be the case, and I cannot doubt it, then of what use can it be to enquire of the rappers respecting unknown events? and how can any man suppose the spirits of the departed to be as much hampered in their investigations as we are ourselves?

"If it will tell me how old my father was when he died," said some one, "I will believe in it." The age was given. "Well, I believe it is right," said he. "But stop, let me think." After reckoning and pencilling a while, he found out that a mistake of ten years had been made. He had made the mistake himself, and it seems the "spirit" of his father could not tell his own age, until his living son had ciphered it out for him! Preposterous! It was from his own spirit alone that the response was given. Communications from the other world, indeed! Alas! what miserable instructors departed spirits must be, if they cannot do their own ciphering!

At the risk of being tedious, I must mention a fact or two more bearing upon this point. I have seen it stated that the spirits are all "Universalists." This is not true. I heard the question, "Is there a place of torment?" answered in the affirmative, decidedly. When people enquire whether their friends are happy or miserable, they are generally told that they are happy. But this is easily accounted for, if their own minds controul the answer. Such is their own belief in the case. And if they have fears upon the point, the "rapping" would be just as likely to "rap" in harmony with their thoughts and wishes, as it was to rap for me at the letter O, of which I was thinking, when I knew very well, and the most stupid spirit, who could read my thoughts at all, must have known, that the real letter was a very different one.

"Which denomination is the nearest to the truth?" was a question which I heard propounded. They had told me that every spirit had hitherto decided in favor of the Baptists, and maintained it through thick and thin. It was so now. Several other denominations were mentioned first, and their claims were all negatived, but as soon as the Baptists were mentioned, thump went the table. And the spirit—he must have been a decided Baptist—would not admit that there is a single error in our denomination, either in doctrine, or practice. But one of the party—she belongs to the Methodists—assured us—and I did not doubt her in the least—that she had heard the same question put to the "spirits" by a group of Methodist "mediums," and that they "rapped" just as stoutly in favour of the Methodists, and abused the Baptists at a great rate. And to the Roman Catholics, the testimony was equally in favor of their infallible Church, and to the prejudice of all heretics. Now, grant me, either that our religious controversies are kept up with equal zeal and bitterness in the other world, or that these responses are made by the spirits which still inhabit this world. Take it either way, what confidence can be placed in such contradictory decisions? Is it not egregious folly to seek for truth at such an oracle?

This is not all. It is sinful, and injurious to ourselves and others. The "medium" may have no intention of deceiving you. He and you may really suppose that you are conversing with the spirits of the departed. But this does not help the matter. You leave the "more sure word of prophecy," and run after a phantom. "Well, I thought so!" My brother assured me, that he had so often heard this exclamation from enquirers into unknown events—the enquiries being made in spite of