

PREFACE

Six years ago I published a small book called *The Cosmos and the Creeds*. It was an inquiry into the alleged finality of the Christian faith. Incidentally was implied disbelief in immortality as generally understood. At that time I thought that such immortality as man possessed lay in the influence his actions, words, or writings had upon those who were his contemporaries, or who came after him ; but that he himself, as an individual conscious entity, disappeared for ever, not to be recognised again. The theory of what happened after death was not an essential part of that which I set out to demonstrate. It was a mere appendage to an argument for a broader conception of the Bible. My book was an attack on the outworn dogmas of the Churches and the presumptuous, hurtful attitude of the priests, who, in my opinion, are misleading the children of this country. The Bible appeared to me then, and appears to me now, to be a compilation of great worth that has been grossly misinterpreted. It contains books of very unequal value, full of fable, poetry, and romance, giving a fragmentary history of the evolution of one branch of the Semitic race during a period of some thousands of years, and the partial

history of a holy man called Jesus Christ, whose short ministry effected a striking change in the ethics of a large portion of the human race. That man, I averred—and I have not changed my opinion—was *not* God, was *not* born of a pure virgin, and was *not* raised in his natural body from the dead.

Directly my book was published I began to feel misgivings as to my agnosticism regarding a future life, for I had not investigated the evidences of those who called themselves "Spiritualists." True, the teachings of the parsons were feeble; but had I exhausted all sources of evidence outside the narrow confines of the Churches? I determined to go into the matter. To be brief, I found that the deeper I went into the study of spiritism the more apparent it became that, whether he wished it or not, man's individuality was not extinguished at death. I read books, visited clairvoyantes, and attended séances for materialisation. Through all I was constantly reminded of the existence of a near and dear relative, older than myself, who passed away thirty-seven years ago in the prime of her life. Her continued reappearances could only lead me to one conclusion: I was being guided to a reconsideration of the problem of immortality. At last I have come to the absolute conviction that what we call "death" is a mere incident, a door to a higher life that is, in reality, more substantial to the senses we shall hereafter possess than the one we set so much store upon here.

The near relative who has proved to me this valuable

truth is called in this volume "Iola," a spirit name which she has herself adopted to avoid the unpleasant complications that may arise from disputes as to her identity among those of her friends and relatives who are not educated in spiritism.

The greater part of the information here given has been published in skeleton form in *Light, Broad Views*, and *Reason*.

The plan I adopted for recording phenomena was as follows :—

I carried about with me a small note-book, in which were written down at the time, or directly the sitting was over, the headings and order of events. Within twenty-four hours these brief notes were expanded into a record of what took place, from memory, assisted by the headings. Where light prevailed all the time, as at the Bangs Sisters, the record is naturally more complete than at dark séances, or where half-light was allowed.

The terms "medium," "sensitive," and "psychic" are used indiscriminately, but the first is not applied to non-professional psychics.

Where there is any probability of my remarks being mistaken for the continuation of a dialogue, they are enclosed within brackets.

The word "spirit" is used throughout as indicating a discarnate entity. It is a loose term, but the one that is in general use, and therefore convenient. There are good reasons for believing that the soul of man, or what is called by the psychic St. Paul

the "spirit body," is composed of extremely refined matter.

Those incidents which I consider as specially good evidences of spirit power or manifestation are preceded by a number.

I desire to express my indebtedness to my publishers' press reader for many suggestions and corrections.

W. U. M.

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