

# **SPIRITUALISM: A NARRATIVE WITH A DISCUSSION**

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Spiritualism: A Narrative with a Discussion by Patrick Proctor Alexander

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# SPIRITUALISM:

A NARRATIVE WITH A DISCUSSION.

BY

PATRICK PROCTOR ALEXANDER, M.A.,

*Author of*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following little Piece was almost wholly written some time since. Originally projected within the limits of a Magazine article, it had strayed very much beyond these; and was thus lying beside me unused, when the startling facts laid before the public by Mr. Crookes, and witnessed to by Dr. Huggins and Mr. Sergeant Cox, once more drew attention to the subject. The yet more extraordinary experiences, testified to by Lord Lindsay immediately afterwards, still further excited attention. Subsequently various other marvels of the like kind have found their way to the public, and 'the cry is, Still they come.' This revival of interest in the subject has suggested the present publication. I cannot but be aware how slight is the importance to be attached to anything written on so narrow a basis of either observation or inquiry; but I print it for what it may be worth, as a mite of contribution to the

discussion. I give it as originally written, though my friend Dr. D—— (to whom reference is frequent) is since dead, to the regret of all who knew him. He was a man of venerable age, but retained at the time of which I write all the powers of a naturally strong and thoroughly cultivated intelligence.

P. P. A.





## SPIRITUALISM :

AN HOUR OR TWO WITH MR. HOME.



SOME time in the spring of last year, Mr. Home, the famous *Medium*, visited Edinburgh for the purpose of giving a series of public readings ; and learning accidentally that he was living with my old and greatly respected friend Dr. D—, in whose house signs and wonders were reported as of nightly occurrence, I had just sufficient interest of curiosity in the matter to lead me to ask leave to be present at a *Séance*. This was readily granted ; and accordingly, on an evening fixed, I presented myself at the house, taking with me (by permission) Dr. Findlater, a man very well known in Edinburgh intellectual circles,—not hitherto suspected by his friends of a tendency to undue credulity in any matter ; a friend, and in some sense disciple, of Mr. John Stuart Mill ; with a couple of good sharp eyes in his head, and perhaps as accurate notions as most men as to what

may constitute Evidence, and the conditions of scientific inquiry. We found a small party assembled; and to Mr. Home we were, of course, introduced. The impression he made on me was, on the whole, favourable. Fair of complexion, he might reasonably be called good-looking, though scarce, in any strict sense, remarkably so. His manners were simple and quiet, and very much those of a gentleman. There was no trace in him whatever of the *charlatan*; and, except for an occasional wildness in his eye—so slight that I may have merely imagined it—none of the *Magus*, or seer, accustomed to hold awful commune with Spirits, either evil or good. After tea we proceeded to business; and I shall narrate, as simply as I may, everything just as it occurred. Though by no means remarkable, and indeed a little insignificant, as compared with other phenomena of the kind on record,—and never, as it seems to me, quite satisfactorily explained,—what took place is perhaps sufficiently curious to be made note of, and may possibly have matter of amusement in it for here and there a reader good-natured enough to be amused.

I may premise that I cannot readily conceive conditions much more favourable to Dr. Findlater and myself, as regards the interest of truth, than those under which this little experiment was made,—more unfavourable to Mr. Home, presumed a mere juggler and impostor. Had Mr. Home advertised an enter-

*Conditions of Inquiry Favourable.* 3

tainment to take place in a hired apartment of his own, I don't think I should have cared to go to see him, any more than I ever cared to go to see Professor Anderson bring puddings out of a hat, or pour liquors from his magic bottle. But the room was Mrs. D——'s drawing-room, and could scarce in any way have been *prepared* by Mr. Home without her or Dr. D——'s connivance,—a theory of the matter, in my own mind, and, I venture to say, that of every one who has ever had the pleasure of their acquaintance, disposed of as utterly inadmissible, in virtue of the known and high character of both. Further, it is certified to me beyond question, that the 'manifestations,' as they are termed, took place indifferently in any or every room in the house, and most particularly in Dr. D——'s bedroom, which could scarce have been tampered with by Mr. Home without his becoming aware of it. None of the company had any relations with Mr. Home, excepting as we ourselves had, *per* favour of our host and hostess; or could thus, any more than we, be suspected of complicity with Mr. Home. The drawing-room was *fully and brightly lit with gas*; and the table, which was good enough to vouchsafe us intelligence from the Spirit-world, an old acquaintance, at which I had aforetime taken tea, undreaming of Mr. Home or of Spirits. If conditions more favourable can be suggested by any scientific gentleman, I shall be glad to