



***FLORENCE  
MARRYAT***

***THERE  
IS NO DEATH***





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**Florence Marryat**

# **There is No Death**

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# **CHAPTER I.**

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## **FAMILY GHOSTS.**

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It has been strongly impressed upon me for some years past to write an account of the wonderful experiences I have passed through in my investigation of the science of Spiritualism. In doing so I intend to confine myself to recording facts. I will describe the scenes I have witnessed with my own eyes, and repeat the words I have heard with my own ears, leaving the deduction to be drawn from them wholly to my readers. I have no ambition to start a theory nor to promulgate a doctrine; above all things I have no desire to provoke an argument. I have had more than enough of arguments, philosophical, scientific, religious, and purely aggressive, to last a lifetime; and were I called upon for my definition of the rest promised to the weary, I should reply—a place where every man may hold his own opinion, and no one is permitted to dispute it.

But though I am about to record a great many incidents that are so marvellous as to be almost incredible, I do not expect to be disbelieved, except by such as are capable of deception themselves. They—conscious of their own infirmity—invariably believe that other people must be telling lies. Byron wrote, "He is a fool who denies that which he cannot disprove;" and though Carlyle gives us the comforting assurance that the population of Great Britain

consists "chiefly of fools," I pin my faith upon receiving credence from the few who are not so.

Why should I be disbelieved? When the late Lady Brassey published the "Cruise of the *Sunbeam*," and Sir Samuel and Lady Baker related their experiences in Central Africa, and Livingstone wrote his account of the wonders he met with whilst engaged in the investigation of the source of the Nile, and Henry Stanley followed up the story and added thereto, did they anticipate the public turning up its nose at their narrations, and declaring it did not believe a word they had written? Yet their readers had to accept the facts they offered for credence, on their authority alone. Very few of them had even *heard* of the places described before; scarcely one in a thousand could, either from personal experience or acquired knowledge, attest the truth of the description. What was there—for the benefit of the general public—to *prove* that the *Sunbeam* had sailed round the world, or that Sir Samuel Baker had met with the rare beasts, birds, and flowers he wrote of, or that Livingstone and Stanley met and spoke with those curious, unknown tribes that never saw white men till they set eyes on them? Yet had any one of those writers affirmed that in his wanderings he had encountered a gold field of undoubted excellence, thousands of fortune-seekers would have left their native land on his word alone, and rushed to secure some of the glittering treasure.

Why? Because the authors of those books were persons well known in society, who had a reputation for veracity to maintain, and who would have been quickly found out had they dared to deceive. I claim the same grounds for

obtaining belief. I have a well-known name and a public reputation, a tolerable brain, and two sharp eyes. What I have witnessed, others, with equal assiduity and perseverance, may witness for themselves. It would demand a voyage round the world to see all that the owners of the *Sunbeam* saw. It would demand time and trouble and money to see what I have seen, and to some people, perhaps, it would not be worth the outlay. But if I have journeyed into the Debateable Land (which so few really believe in, and most are terribly afraid of), and come forward now to tell what I have seen there, the world has no more right to disbelieve me than it had to disbelieve Lady Brassey. Because the general public has not penetrated Central Africa, is no reason that Livingstone did not do so; because the general public has not seen (and does not care to see) what I have seen, is no argument against the truth of what I write. To those who *do* believe in the possibility of communion with disembodied spirits, my story will be interesting perhaps, on account of its dealing throughout in a remarkable degree with the vexed question of identity and recognition. To the materialistic portion of creation who may credit me with not being a bigger fool than the remainder of the thirty-eight millions of Great Britain, it may prove a new source of speculation and research. And for those of my fellow-creatures who possess no curiosity, nor imagination, nor desire to prove for themselves what they cannot accept on the testimony of others, I never had, and never shall have, anything in common. They are the sort of people who ask you with a pleasing smile if Irving wrote "The Charge of



the Light Brigade," and say they like Byron's "Sardanapalus" very well, but it is not so funny as "Our Boys."

Now, before going to work in right earnest, I do not think it is generally known that my father, the late Captain Marryat, was not only a believer in ghosts, but himself a ghost-seer. I am delighted to be able to record this fact as an introduction to my own experiences. Perhaps the ease with which such manifestations have come to me is a gift which I inherit from him, anyway I am glad he shared the belief and the power of spiritual sight with me. If there were no other reason to make me bold to repeat what I have witnessed, the circumstance would give me courage. My father was not like his intimate friends, Charles Dickens, Lord Lytton, and many other men of genius, highly strung, nervous, and imaginative. I do not believe my father had any "nerves," and I think he had very little imagination. Almost all his works are founded on his personal experiences. His *forte* lay in a humorous description of what he had seen. He possessed a marvellous power of putting his recollections into graphic and forcible language, and the very reason that his books are almost as popular to-day as when they were written, is because they are true histories of their time. There is scarcely a line of fiction in them. His body was as powerful and muscular as his brain. His courage was indomitable—his moral courage as well as his physical (as many people remember to their cost to this day), and his hardness of belief on many subjects is no secret. What I am about to relate therefore did not happen to some excitable, nervous, sickly sentimentalist, and I

repeat that I am proud to have inherited his constitutional tendencies, and quite willing to stand judgment after him.

I have heard that my father had a number of stories to relate of supernatural (as they are usually termed) incidents that had occurred to him, but I will content myself with relating such as were proved to be (at the least) very remarkable coincidences. In my work, "The Life and Letters of Captain Marryat," I relate an anecdote of him that was entered in his private "log," and found amongst his papers. He had a younger brother, Samuel, to whom he was very much attached, and who died unexpectedly in England whilst my father, in command of H. M. S. *Larne*, was engaged in the first Burmese war. His men broke out with scurvy and he was ordered to take his vessel over to Pulu Pinang for a few weeks in order to get the sailors fresh fruit and vegetables. As my father was lying in his berth one night, anchored off the island, with the brilliant tropical moonlight making everything as bright as day, he saw the door of his cabin open, and his brother Samuel entered and walked quietly up to his side. He looked just the same as when they had parted, and uttered in a perfectly distinct voice, "Fred! I have come to tell you that I am dead!" When the figure entered the cabin my father jumped up in his berth, thinking it was some one coming to rob him, and when he saw who it was and heard it speak, he leaped out of bed with the intention of detaining it, but it was gone. So vivid was the impression made upon him by the apparition that he drew out his log at once and wrote down all particulars concerning it, with the hour and day of its appearance. On reaching England after the war was over,

the first dispatches put into his hand were to announce the death of his brother, who had passed away at the very hour when he had seen him in the cabin.

But the story that interests me most is one of an incident which occurred to my father during my lifetime, and which we have always called "The Brown Lady of Rainham." I am aware that this narrative has reached the public through other sources, and I have made it the foundation of a Christmas story myself. But it is too well authenticated to be omitted here. The last fifteen years of my father's life were passed on his own estate of Langham, in Norfolk, and amongst his county friends were Sir Charles and Lady Townshend of Rainham Hall. At the time I speak of, the title and property had lately changed hands, and the new baronet had re-papered, painted, and furnished the Hall throughout, and come down with his wife and a large party of friends to take possession. But to their annoyance, soon after their arrival, rumors arose that the house was haunted, and their guests began, one and all (like those in the parable), to make excuses to go home again. Sir Charles and Lady Townshend might have sung, "Friend after friend departs," with due effect, but it would have had none on the general exodus that took place from Rainham. And it was all on account of a Brown Lady, whose portrait hung in one of the bedrooms, and in which she was represented as wearing a brown satin dress with yellow trimmings, and a ruff around her throat—a very harmless, innocent-looking young woman. But they all declared they had seen her walking about the house—some in the corridor, some in their bedrooms, others in the lower premises, and neither guests

nor servants would remain in the Hall. The baronet was naturally very much annoyed about it, and confided his trouble to my father, and my father was indignant at the trick he believed had been played upon him. There was a great deal of smuggling and poaching in Norfolk at that period, as he knew well, being a magistrate of the county, and he felt sure that some of these depredators were trying to frighten the Townshends away from the Hall again. The last baronet had been a solitary sort of being, and lead a retired life, and my father imagined some of the tenantry had their own reasons for not liking the introduction of revelries and "high jinks" at Rainham. So he asked his friends to let him stay with them and sleep in the haunted chamber, and he felt sure he could rid them of the nuisance. They accepted his offer, and he took possession of the room in which the portrait of the apparition hung, and in which she had been often seen, and slept each night with a loaded revolver under his pillow. For two days, however, he saw nothing, and the third was to be the limit of his stay. On the third night, however, two young men (nephews of the baronet) knocked at his door as he was undressing to go to bed, and asked him to step over to their room (which was at the other end of the corridor), and give them his opinion on a new gun just arrived from London. My father was in his shirt and trousers, but as the hour was late, and everybody had retired to rest except themselves, he prepared to accompany them as he was. As they were leaving the room, he caught up his revolver, "in case we meet the Brown Lady," he said, laughing. When the inspection of the gun was over, the young men in the same spirit declared they



would accompany my father back again, "in case you meet the Brown Lady," they repeated, laughing also. The three gentlemen therefore returned in company.

The corridor was long and dark, for the lights had been extinguished, but as they reached the middle of it, they saw the glimmer of a lamp coming towards them from the other end. "One of the ladies going to visit the nurseries," whispered the young Townshends to my father. Now the bedroom doors in that corridor faced each other, and each room had a double door with a space between, as is the case in many old-fashioned country houses. My father (as I have said) was in a shirt and trousers only, and his native modesty made him feel uncomfortable, so he slipped within one of the *outer* doors (his friends following his example), in order to conceal himself until the lady should have passed by. I have heard him describe how he watched her approaching nearer and nearer, through the chink of the door, until, as she was close enough for him to distinguish the colors and style of her costume, he recognized the figure as the facsimile of the portrait of "The Brown Lady." He had his finger on the trigger of his revolver, and was about to demand it to stop and give the reason for its presence there, when the figure halted of its own accord before the door behind which he stood, and holding the lighted lamp she carried to her features, grinned in a malicious and diabolical manner at him. This act so infuriated my father, who was anything but lamb-like in disposition, that he sprang into the corridor with a bound, and discharged the revolver right in her face. The figure instantly disappeared—the figure at which for the space of

several minutes *three* men had been looking together—and the bullet passed through the outer door of the room on the opposite side of the corridor, and lodged in the panel of the inner one. My father never attempted again to interfere with "The Brown Lady of Rainham," and I have heard that she haunts the premises to this day. That she did so at that time, however, there is no shadow of doubt.

But Captain Marryat not only held these views and believed in them from personal experience—he promulgated them in his writings. There are many passages in his works which, read by the light of my assertion, prove that he had faith in the possibility of the departed returning to visit this earth, and in the theory of re-incarnation or living more than one life upon it, but nowhere does he speak more plainly than in the following extract from the "Phantom Ship":—

"Think you, Philip," (says Amine to her husband), "that this world is solely peopled by such dross as we are?—things of clay, perishable and corruptible, lords over beasts and ourselves, but little better? Have you not, from your own sacred writings, repeated acknowledgments and proofs of higher intelligences, mixing up with mankind, and acting here below? Why should what was *then* not be *now*, and what more harm is there to apply for their aid now than a few thousand years ago? Why should you suppose that they were permitted on the earth then and not permitted now? What has become of them? Have they perished? Have they been ordered back? to where?—to heaven? If to heaven, the world and mankind have been left to the mercy of the devil and his agents. Do you suppose that we poor mortals have

been thus abandoned? I tell you plainly, I think not. We no longer have the communication with those intelligences that we once had, because as we become more enlightened we become more proud and seek them not, but that they still exist a host of good against a host of evil, invisibly opposing each other, is my conviction."

One testimony to such a belief, from the lips of my father, is sufficient. He would not have written it unless he had been prepared to maintain it. He was not one of those wretched literary cowards who we meet but too often now-a-days, who are too much afraid of the world to confess with their mouths the opinions they hold in their hearts. Had he lived to this time I believe he would have been one of the most energetic and outspoken believers in Spiritualism that we possess. So much, however, for his testimony to the possibility of spirits, good and evil, revisiting this earth. I think few will be found to gainsay the assertion that where *he* trod, his daughter need not be ashamed to follow.

Before the question of Spiritualism, however, arose in modern times, I had had my own little private experiences on the subject. From an early age I was accustomed to see, and to be very much alarmed at seeing, certain forms that appeared to me at night. One in particular, I remember, was that of a very short or deformed old woman, who was very constant to me. She used to stand on tiptoe to look at me as I lay in bed, and however dark the room might be, I could always see every article in it, as if illuminated, whilst she remained there.

I was in the habit of communicating these visions to my mother and sisters (my father had passed from us by that

time), and always got well ridiculed for my pains. "Another of Flo's optical illusions," they would cry, until I really came to think that the appearances I saw were due to some defect in my eye-sight. I have heard my first husband say, that when he married me he thought he should never rest for an entire night in his bed, so often did I wake him with the description of some man or woman I had seen in the room. I recall these figures distinctly. They were always dressed in white, from which circumstance I imagined that they were natives who had stolen in to rob us, until, from repeated observation, I discovered they only formed part of another and more enlarged series of my "optical illusions." All this time I was very much afraid of seeing what I termed "ghosts." No love of occult science led me to investigate the cause of my alarm. I only wished never to see the "illusions" again, and was too frightened to remain by myself lest they should appear to me.

When I had been married for about two years, the headquarters of my husband's regiment, the 12th Madras Native Infantry, was ordered to Rangoon, whilst the left wing, commanded by a Major Cooper, was sent to assist in the bombardment of Canton. Major Cooper had only been married a short time, and by rights his wife had no claim to sail with the head-quarters for Burmah, but as she had no friends in Madras, and was moreover expecting her confinement, our colonel permitted her to do so, and she accompanied us to Rangoon, settling herself in a house not far from our own. One morning, early in July, I was startled by receiving a hurried scrawl from her, containing only these words, "Come! come! come!" I set off at once, thinking she



had been taken ill, but on my arrival I found Mrs. Cooper sitting up in bed with only her usual servants about her. "What is the matter?" I exclaimed. "Mark is dead," she answered me; "he sat in that chair" (pointing to one by the bedside) "all last night. I noticed every detail of his face and figure. He was in undress, and he never raised his eyes, but sat with the peak of his forage cap pulled down over his face. But I could see the back of his head and his hair, and I know it was he. I spoke to him but he did not answer me, and I am *sure* he is dead."

Naturally, I imagined this vision to have been dictated solely by fear and the state of her health. I laughed at her for a simpleton, and told her it was nothing but fancy, and reminded her that by the last accounts received from the seat of war, Major Cooper was perfectly well and anticipating a speedy reunion with her. Laugh as I would, however, I could not laugh her out of her belief, and seeing how low-spirited she was, I offered to pass the night with her. It was a very nice night indeed. As soon as ever we had retired to bed, although a lamp burned in the room, Mrs. Cooper declared that her husband was sitting in the same chair as the night before, and accused me of deception when I declared that I saw nothing at all. I sat up in bed and strained my eyes, but I could discern nothing but an empty arm-chair, and told her so. She persisted that Major Cooper sat there, and described his personal appearance and actions. I got out of bed and sat in the chair, when she cried out, "Don't, don't! *You are sitting right on him!*" It was evident that the apparition was as real to her as if it had been flesh and blood. I jumped up again fast enough, not

feeling very comfortable myself, and lay by her side for the remainder of the night, listening to her asseverations that Major Cooper was either dying or dead. She would not part with me, and on the third night I had to endure the same ordeal as on the second. After the third night the apparition ceased to appear to her, and I was permitted to return home. But before I did so, Mrs. Cooper showed me her pocket-book, in which she had written down against the 8th, 9th, and 10th of July this sentence: "Mark sat by my bedside all night."

The time passed on, and no bad news arrived from China, but the mails had been intercepted and postal communication suspended. Occasionally, however, we received letters by a sailing vessel. At last came September, and on the third of that month Mrs. Cooper's baby was born and died. She was naturally in great distress about it, and I was doubly horrified when I was called from her bedside to receive the news of her husband's death, which had taken place from a sudden attack of fever at Macao. We did not intend to let Mrs. Cooper hear of this until she was convalescent, but as soon as I re-entered her room she broached the subject.

"Are there any letters from China?" she asked. (Now this question was remarkable in itself, because the mails having been cut off, there was no particular date when letters might be expected to arrive from the seat of war.) Fearing she would insist upon hearing the news, I temporized and answered her, "We have received none." "But there is a letter for me," she continued: "a letter with the intelligence of Mark's death. It is useless denying it. I know he is dead."

He died on the 10th of July." And on reference to the official memorandum, this was found to be true. Major Cooper had been taken ill on the first day he had appeared to his wife, and died on the third. And this incident was the more remarkable, because they were neither of them young nor sentimental people, neither had they lived long enough together to form any very strong sympathy or accord between them. But as I have related it, so it occurred.

## CHAPTER II.

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### MY FIRST SÉANCE.

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I had returned from India and spent several years in England before the subject of Modern Spiritualism was brought under my immediate notice. Cursorily I had heard it mentioned by some people as a dreadfully wicked thing, diabolical to the last degree, by others as a most amusing pastime for evening parties, or when one wanted to get some "fun out of the table." But neither description charmed me, nor tempted me to pursue the occupation. I had already lost too many friends. Spiritualism (so it seemed to me) must either be humbug or a very solemn thing, and I neither wished to trifle with it or to be trifled with by it. And after twenty years' continued experience I hold the same opinion. I have proved Spiritualism *not* to be humbug, therefore I regard it in a sacred light. For, *from whatever cause* it may proceed, it opens a vast area for thought to any speculative mind, and it is a matter of constant surprise to me to see the indifference with which the world regards it. That it *exists* is an undeniable fact. Men of science have acknowledged it, and the churches cannot deny it. The only question appears to be, "*What* is it, and *whence* does the power proceed?" If (as many clever people assert) from ourselves, then must these bodies and minds of ours possess faculties hitherto undreamed of, and which we have allowed to lie culpably fallow. If our bodies contain magnetic



forces sufficient to raise substantial and apparently living forms from the bare earth, which our eyes are clairvoyant enough to see, and which can articulate words which our ears are clairaudent enough to hear—if, in addition to this, our minds can read each other's inmost thoughts, can see what is passing at a distance, and foretell what will happen in the future, then are our human powers greater than we have ever imagined, and we ought to do a great deal more with them than we do. And even regarding Spiritualism from *that* point of view, I cannot understand the lack of interest displayed in the discovery, to turn these marvellous powers of the human mind to greater account.

To discuss it, however, from the usual meaning given to the word, namely, as a means of communication with the departed, leaves me as puzzled as before. All Christians acknowledge they have spirits independent of their bodies, and that when their bodies die, their spirits will continue to live on. Wherein, then, lies the terror of the idea that these liberated spirits will have the privilege of roaming the universe as they will? And if they argue the *impossibility* of their return, they deny the records which form the only basis of their religion. No greater proof can be brought forward of the truth of Spiritualism than the truth of the Bible, which teems and bristles with accounts of it from beginning to end. From the period when the Lord God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and the angels came to Abram's tent, and pulled Lot out of the doomed city; when the witch of Endor raised up Samuel, and Balaam's ass spoke, and Ezekiel wrote that the hair of his head stood up because "a spirit" passed before him, to the presence of

Satan with Jesus in the desert, and the reappearance of Moses and Elias, the resurrection of Christ Himself, and His talking and eating with His disciples, and the final account of John being caught up to Heaven to receive the Revelations—*all is Spiritualism, and nothing else*. The Protestant Church that pins its faith upon the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, cannot deny that the spirits of mortal men have reappeared and been recognized upon this earth, as when the graves opened at the time of the Christ's crucifixion, and "many bodies of those that were dead arose and went into the city, and were seen of many." The Catholic Church does not attempt to deny it. All her legends and miracles (which are disbelieved and ridiculed by the Protestants aforesaid) are founded on the same truth—the miraculous or supernatural return (as it is styled) of those who are gone, though I hope to make my readers believe, as I do, that there is nothing miraculous in it, and far from being *supernatural* it is only a continuation of Nature. Putting the churches and the Bible, however, on one side, the History of Nations proves it to be possible. There is not a people on the face of the globe that has not its (so-called) superstitions, nor a family hardly, which has not experienced some proofs of spiritual communion with earth. Where learning and science have thrust all belief out of sight, it is only natural that the man who does not believe in a God nor a Hereafter should not credit the existence of spirits, nor the possibility of communicating with them. But the lower we go in the scale of society, the more simple and childlike the mind, the more readily does such a faith gain credence, and the more stories you will hear to justify belief.

It is just the same with religion, which is hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes.

If I am met here with the objection that the term "Spiritualism" has been at times mixed up with so much that is evil as to become an offence, I have no better answer to make than by turning to the irrefragable testimony of the Past and Present to prove that in all ages, and of all religions, there have been corrupt and demoralized exponents whose vices have threatened to pull down the fabric they lived to raise. Christianity itself would have been overthrown before now, had we been unable to separate its doctrine from its practice.

I held these views in the month of February, 1873, when I made one of a party of friends assembled at the house of Miss Elizabeth Philip, in Gloucester Crescent, and was introduced to Mr. Henry Dunphy of the *Morning Post*, both of them since gone to join the great majority. Mr. Dunphy soon got astride of his favorite hobby of Spiritualism, and gave me an interesting account of some of the *séances* he had attended. I had heard so many clever men and women discuss the subject before, that I had begun to believe on their authority that there must be "something in it," but I held the opinion that sittings in the dark must afford so much liberty for deception, that I would engage in none where I was not permitted the use of my eyesight.

I expressed myself somewhat after this fashion to Mr. Dunphy. He replied, "Then the time has arrived for you to investigate Spiritualism, for I can introduce you to a medium who will show you the faces of the dead." This proposal exactly met my wishes, and I gladly accepted it. Annie

Thomas (Mrs. Pender Cudlip,) the novelist, who is an intimate friend of mine, was staying with me at the time and became as eager as I was to investigate the phenomena. We took the address Mr. Dunphy gave us of Mrs. Holmes, the American medium, then visiting London, and lodging in Old Quebec Street, Portman Square, but we refused his introduction, preferring to go *incognito*. Accordingly, the next evening, when she held a public *séance*, we presented ourselves at Mrs. Holmes' door; and having first removed our wedding-rings, and tried to look as virginal as possible, sent up our names as Miss Taylor and Miss Turner. I am perfectly aware that this medium was said afterwards to be untrustworthy. So may a servant who was perfectly honest, whilst in my service, leave me for a situation where she is detected in theft. That does not alter the fact that she stole nothing from me. I do not think I know *a single medium* of whom I have not (at some time or other) heard the same thing, and I do not think I know a single woman whom I have not also, at some time or other, heard scandalized by her own sex, however pure and chaste she may imagine the world holds her. The question affects me in neither case. I value my acquaintances for what they are *to me*, not for what they may be to others; and I have placed trust in my media from what I individually have seen and heard, and proved to be genuine in their presence, and not from what others may imagine they have found out about them. It is no detriment to my witness that the media I sat with cheated somebody else, either before or after. My business was only to take care that *I* was not cheated, and I have

never, in Spiritualism, accepted anything at the hands of others that I could not prove for myself.

Mrs. Holmes did not receive us very graciously on the present occasion. We were strangers to her—probably sceptics, and she eyed us rather coldly. It was a bitter night, and the snow lay so thick upon the ground that we had some difficulty in procuring a hansom to take us from Bayswater to Old Quebec Street. No other visitors arrived, and after a little while Mrs. Holmes offered to return our money (ten shillings), as she said if she did sit with us, there would probably be no manifestations on account of the inclemency of the weather. (Often since then I have proved her assertion to be true, and found that any extreme of heat or cold is liable to make a *séance* a dead failure).

But Annie Thomas had to return to her home in Torquay on the following day, and so we begged the medium to try at least to show us something, as we were very curious on the subject. I am not quite sure what I expected or hoped for on this occasion. I was full of curiosity and anticipation, but I am sure that I never thought I should see any face which I could recognize as having been on earth. We waited till nine o'clock in hopes that a circle would be formed, but as no one else came, Mrs. Holmes consented to sit with us alone, warning us, however, several times to prepare for a disappointment. The lights were therefore extinguished, and we sat for the usual preliminary dark *séance*, which was good, perhaps, but has nothing to do with a narrative of facts, proved to be so. When it concluded, the gas was re-lit and we sat for "Spirit Faces."



There were two small rooms connected by folding doors. Annie Thomas and I, were asked to go into the back room—to lock the door communicating with the landings, and secure it with our own seal, stamped upon a piece of tape stretched across the opening—to examine the window and bar the shutter inside—to search the room thoroughly, in fact, to see that no one was concealed in it—and we did all this as a matter of business. When we had satisfied ourselves that no one could enter from the back, Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, Annie Thomas, and I were seated on four chairs in the front room, arranged in a row before the folding doors, which were opened, and a square of black calico fastened across the aperture from one wall to the other. In this piece of calico was cut a square hole about the size of an ordinary window, at which we were told the spirit faces (if any) would appear. There was no singing, nor noise of any sort made to drown the sounds of preparation, and we could have heard even a rustle in the next room. Mr. and Mrs. Holmes talked to us of their various experiences, until, we were almost tired of waiting, when something white and indistinct like a cloud of tobacco smoke, or a bundle of gossamer, appeared and disappeared again.

"They are coming! I *am* glad!" said Mrs. Holmes. "I didn't think we should get anything to-night,"—and my friend and I were immediately on the tiptoe of expectation. The white mass advanced and retreated several times, and finally settled before the aperture and opened in the middle, when a female face was distinctly to be seen above the black calico. What was our amazement to recognize the features of Mrs. Thomas, Annie Thomas' mother. Here I should tell

my readers that Annie's father, who was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy and captain of the coastguard at Morston in Norfolk, had been a near neighbor and great friend of my father, Captain Marryat, and their children had associated like brothers and sisters. I had therefore known Mrs. Thomas well, and recognized her at once, as, of course, did her daughter. The witness of two people is considered sufficient in law. It ought to be accepted by society. Poor Annie was very much affected, and talked to her mother in the most incoherent manner. The spirit did not appear able to answer in words, but she bowed her head or shook it, according as she wished to say "yes" or "no." I could not help feeling awed at the appearance of the dear old lady, but the only thing that puzzled me was the cap she wore, which was made of white net, quilled closely round her face, and unlike any I had ever seen her wear in life. I whispered this to Annie, and she replied at once, "It is the cap she was buried in," which settled the question. Mrs. Thomas had possessed a very pleasant but very uncommon looking face, with bright black eyes, and a complexion of pink and white like that of a child. It was some time before Annie could be persuaded to let her mother go, but the next face that presented itself astonished her quite as much, for she recognized it as that of Captain Gordon, a gentleman whom she had known intimately and for a length of time. I had never seen Captain Gordon in the flesh, but I had heard of him, and knew he had died from a sudden accident. All I saw was the head of a good-looking, fair, young man, and not feeling any personal interest in his appearance, I occupied the time during which my friend conversed with him about

olden days, by minutely examining the working of the muscles of his throat, which undeniably stretched when his head moved. As I was doing so, he leaned forward, and I saw a dark stain, which looked like a clot of blood, on his fair hair, on the left side of the forehead.

"Annie! what did Captain Gordon die of?" I asked. "He fell from a railway carriage," she replied, "and struck his head upon the line." I then pointed out to her the blood upon his hair. Several other faces appeared, which we could not recognize. At last came one of a gentleman, apparently moulded like a bust in plaster of Paris. He had a kind of smoking cap upon the head, curly hair, and a beard, but from being perfectly colorless, he looked so unlike nature, that I could not trace a resemblance to any friend of mine, though he kept on bowing in my direction, to indicate that I knew, or had known him. I examined this face again and again in vain. Nothing in it struck me as familiar, until the mouth broke into a grave, amused smile at my perplexity. In a moment I recognized it as that of my dear old friend, John Powles, whose history I shall relate *in extenso* further on. I exclaimed "Powles," and sprang towards it, but with my hasty action the figure disappeared. I was terribly vexed at my imprudence, for this was the friend of all others I desired to see, and sat there, hoping and praying the spirit would return, but it did not. Annie Thomas' mother and friend both came back several times; indeed, Annie recalled Captain Gordon so often, that on his last appearance the power was so exhausted, his face looked like a faded sketch in water-colors, but "Powles" had vanished altogether. The last face we saw that night was that of a little girl, and only her eyes

and nose were visible, the rest of her head and face being enveloped in some white flimsy material like muslin. Mrs. Holmes asked her for whom she came, and she intimated that it was for me. I said she must be mistaken, and that I had known no one in life like her. The medium questioned her very closely, and tried to put her "out of court," as it were. Still, the child persisted that she came for me. Mrs. Holmes said to me, "Cannot you remember *anyone* of that age connected with you in the spirit world? No cousin, nor niece, nor sister, nor the child of a friend?" I tried to remember, but I could not, and answered, "No! no child of that age." She then addressed the little spirit. "You have made a mistake. There is no one here who knows you. You had better move on." So the child did move on, but very slowly and reluctantly. I could read her disappointment in her eyes, and after she had disappeared, she peeped round the corner again and looked at me, longingly. This was "Florence," my dear *lost* child (as I then called her), who had left me as a little infant of ten days old, and whom I could not at first recognize as a young girl of ten years. Her identity, however, has been proved to me since, beyond all doubt, as will be seen in the chapter which relates my reunion with her, and is headed "My Spirit Child." Thus ended the first *séance* at which I ever assisted, and it made a powerful impression upon my mind. Mrs. Holmes, in bidding us good-night, said, "You two ladies must be very powerful mediums. I never held so successful a *séance* with strangers in my life before." This news elated us—we were eager to pursue our investigations, and were enchanted to think we could have *séances* at home, and as soon as Annie

Thomas took up her residence in London, we agreed to hold regular meetings for the purpose. This was the *séance* that made me a student of the psychological phenomena, which the men of the nineteenth century term Spiritualism. Had it turned out a failure, I might now have been as most men are. *Quien sabe?* As it was, it incited me to go on and on, until I have seen and heard things which at that moment would have seemed utterly impossible to me. And I would not have missed the experience I have passed through for all the good this world could offer me.