

Table Moving, Spirit Rappings, and Science.

We have received a letter from one of our constant readers—J. A. Taft, of Irvine, Pa.,—in which he takes exceptions to the conclusions of Prof. Faraday, an abstract of whose experiments we published on page 355. It will be recollected by our readers that Faraday established two things by his experiments, 1st. That the turning of a table by persons sitting around it, with their hands joined and resting on the top, was not due to a current of electricity developed by the bodies of the experimenters. 2nd. That it was caused by the hand pressure of the operators, the mind directing the pressure, and consequently the table's direction." Mr. Taft says he has seen a table moved with himself upon it, and raised nearly six feet high. He has seen it moved when no one was moving it, and has known of a bell (in the dark though) lifted from a table, rung, and thrown across the room. He has also seen many other tricks performed, all done by the spirit of a person named Dunn, well known in that community, who was a very tricky chap while alive, but who, it seems, has become more devilishly tricky and expert since he died.—He has also known of correct messages being received by the spirit rappings, and he can produce good vouchers for the truth of all he writes about. We certainly do not doubt but Mr. Taft believes all that he asserts to be true, and do not require any vouchers, but he asks the following question: "I would like to have some one give a scientific explanation of the thing," and to this we will give an answer, and also make some remarks to the following extract on the same subject, taken from a recent letter of Judge Edmonds, of this city, published in the Courier and Enquirer. Judge Edmonds in his letter says:—

"We are taught that none of these extraordinary things which are witnessed by so many are miraculous, or flow from any suspension of nature's laws, but are, on the other hand, in conformity with and in execution of those laws; that, like the steam engine and the magnetic telegraph, they are marvellous only to those who do not understand them, or are not familiar with them, and those laws, and the means by which they produce such results are as capable of being found out by human research, that the knowledge is not confined to a few, but is open to all, rich or poor, high or low, wise or ignorant, who will wisely and patiently search for it."

To Mr. Taft we will merely say that he asks a very unreasonable question. If he believes that the spirit of Dunn performed the cantraps, why does he ask a scientific explanation of them. If he is convinced that a spirit performed them, he has his explanation. Scientific men have dealings with the material universe only, and they should not be asked spiritual questions. The Judge is a distinguished lawyer, and although he should, it is very evident that he does not know what a "law of nature is, nor does he seem to have a knowledge of the laws which govern the motion of inorganic bodies. A law of nature is a mere operation of matter. Thus an apple thrown upwards will always return to the earth, and this we say is according to the law of gravity, by which larger bodies attract or draw smaller ones to them. We know nothing of a law of nature independent of the operations—the action—of matter, and the results must always be uniform. If these spirit rappings and table movings are in conformity with the laws of nature, like the steam engine as Judge Edmonds asserts, then the results will always be uniform and he can tell us, and everybody, how such operations can be seen, heard, or felt—displayed—by every person and in any place. If these extraordinary things are according to nature's law, Judge Edmonds can give the rules for convincing the public. Neither the telegraph nor steam engine require either reasoning or sophistry to prove their identity—they convince without argument.

The "New York Tribune" has given expression to some very unreasonable ideas respecting scientific men investigating and giving an explanation of such phenomena. The first law of science in respect to inorganic bodies, is that "no body at rest has power to move of itself; nor of itself, when in motion, to change its direction." This is the

law of inertia; we therefore say, a table at rest cannot move of itself, consequently those who say they believe such extraordinary things as table moving, &c., are produced by spirits, present evidence of their own doubts, when they ask for a scientific explanation of them. We do not believe that a disembodied spirit has the least power to operate matter; if it has, then the responsibility of living men must be greatly circumscribed, especially if a spirit gets into a steam boiler; it might explode the boiler, and wrongfully we might blame the engineer for carrying too much steam. The ridiculous stuff published in many papers as the doings of disembodied spirits, such as the nonsense in the Hon. Mr. Talmadge's letter, about our Cato Calhoun's spirit playing on an accordeon, is enough to make fools blush for human credulity. We have never seen a table move without some known power moving it, neither do we know anything about the rappings, because we have considered them beneath our attention. If these extraordinary things, however, are in conformity with nature's laws, as Judge Edmonds asserts—like the telegraph and steam engine, about which we know something—we can easily be convinced of error, and proven to be mistaken; at present we are blue and buff skeptics.