

Light:

A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research.

"LIGHT ! MORE LIGHT!"—Goethe.

"WHATEVER DOETH MAKE MANIFEST IS LIGHT."—Paul.

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

'The Liverpool Daily Post' prints the Address of Professor Richet, to which we recently referred, and it prints also a leading article which very well represents what the modern Briton is pleased to call his 'common-sense.' We are gravely told that Professor Richet 'fails to perceive the difference between certainty, which is a mental condition, and objective truth,' and, by objective truth, 'The Post' tells us that it means 'what all the world, for working purposes, agrees to regard as objective truth.' Was there ever such nonsense ! What all the world agrees to regard as objective truth is usually mere common place ; and there are always oceans and continents of truth beyond that. 'The Post' might as well talk of failing to perceive the difference between the body and food. Certainty, as a mental condition, is the result of experience of objective truth, or of rational thought.

It is true that 'The Post' has ready its tale about a lunatic who fancied things. But Professor Richet is not a lunatic ; he is, as 'The Post' admits, 'a scientific man of European fame' ; and even as to the lunatic, in the story, there may have been some objective fact well worth attention. 'The Post' says : 'Perfect and absolute certainty is consistent with absolute and constant error.' That is true ; but the certainty which is consistent with absolute and constant error is usually a negative certainty—the certainty that such and such things cannot be. 'All the world' is full of such 'certainties,' and all the world is usually wrong. But 'The Post' 'fails to perceive that,' and solemnly tells us that the 'competent opinion' of the majority that certain things are improbable is 'the greatest possible safeguard of truth.' That is a risky assertion in face of the undoubted fact that the history of science is the history of struggles against, and victories over, the decisions and assertions of 'authorities' everywhere—in Church and State, Laboratory and Market, Newspaper and Club.

'The Post' says we rightly call a man mad 'simply and solely because his experience contravenes the habitual and almost unanimous opinion of mankind.' That is true, but it is nothing to brag about. It only shows us that in the past 'the habitual and almost unanimous opinion of mankind' has been a fool. And what has been, perhaps is.

It is part of our duty to keep down, as far as possible, the brute side of poor human nature ; for, without that, our pure faith will never get a chance. Hence, we not only detest, but despise, the present-day glorification of the fighting class and their degraded business. A clever writer in 'Humanity' suggests ridicule ; and we are

inclined to think he is right. We give sufficient to indicate how he proposes to apply it :—

I am inclined to think that the most effective way to approach the subject of war is on its ludicrous side. It is really a matter for *opéra bouffe*, this business of armaments. If only Gilbert and Sullivan had depicted a neighbourhood organised on the same principle ! Fancy all the households of a village day after day bringing into their homes new catapults and blunderbusses, watching each other from the windows, each one trying to scrape money together to buy two weapons when his neighbour buys one, practising at shooting at a mark with their families in the back-yard, going barefoot and hungry so as to pay the gunsmith's bill, treating each other with the most punctilious politeness meanwhile, and in twenty long years never so much as shaking a fist at each other, and yet making greater preparations for a row than ever ! Even in Kentucky such a comic opera would bring down the house. Oh, for a little of that sense of humour which we think we have, but which we so sorely need !

And this feature of burlesque runs all through the military world. I know something about it in a small way, I served eight years in the National Guard, and I know what it is to ride up and down Fifth Avenue on a riding-school nag, in a cocked hat, feeling like a composite photograph of Napoleon and Washington. There is absolutely nothing but vanity at the bottom of the whole business, either in the militia or the regular army.

All soldiering is a 'playing at soldiers.' None of it is serious until a man gets a bullet in his head. Without brass bands and brass buttons it would not last a day.

All this militarism, I say, brutal, childish, reactionary, bound up in caste and cruelty, is a disgrace to the civilisation of our time. It is a vast bubble, blown out of nothingness, waiting for someone to prick it, and ready to collapse if we will but once presume to laugh at it.

'The Inquirer' prints the following notice of an important paper in 'The New World':—

In an article on 'Immortality and Psychical Research,' Professor J. H. Hyslop, of Columbia University, asserts that the religious mind, which has surrendered belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures, must choose between science and Catholicism. 'It must either fall back upon the tradition and authority of the Church, or surrender to the jurisdiction of science. In accepting the latter, it has no other alternative between agnosticism and spiritism in respect to the problem of immortality.' Such a dilemma we cannot for a moment accept. Whatever the phenomena of spiritism may imply, our conviction of immortality rests on far other grounds, untouched by any question of infallible scriptures or tradition. Our reliance is not on the phenomena of 'spiritism,' but on spiritual insight, which is the fruit of personal religious life.

That apparently pious conclusion has in it, for us, a core of unconscious disbelief. Why should a real through and through believer in immortality resent or shrink from the offer to prove the truth of what is only believed ? 'Spiritual insight' is a vague phrase ; and the utmost it can yield is longing, trust or hope.

But be that as it may, we think Professor Hyslop is right. The choice is between Catholicism and Science ; and, by Science, we mean experiment and demonstration. This is a straight issue, and we confidently submit that, in regard to the problem of immortality, Spiritualism or Spiritism best represents Science. We invite the amiable 'Inquirer' to think that out.

Mr. W. H. Edwards writes a quaint letter to 'The Agnostic Journal.' He seems to be an Agnostic but still a

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convinced Spiritualist. The following paragraph is, at all events, piquant :—

Spiritist and Spiritualist are synonyms, and mean nothing more than a belief in the reality of communication between an embodied and a disembodied intelligence. From personal knowledge, the writer is perfectly satisfied such communications do take place beyond the possibility of doubt, but he is also well aware that falsehood is far more likely to be the first results to the inquirer than truth, owing to the millions of Christians who have gone over to the great majority.

Of these unfriendly and misleading Christians, he says :—

The Catholic spirits are the worst offenders, and wage implacable war against mediums who endeavour to spread the truth. They are called the adversaries in the spirit world, and take possession of any medium they can influence to keep the truth from being known, by causing mediums to do something discreditable and so destroy their reputations. By this and other means they keep a certain amount of power by forming organisations as in this world, until at length they do something which enables them to be broken up.

We do not criticise this agnostic way of looking at things ; it is a view which is quite entitled to a place. Nor do we care to criticise when Mr. Edwards adds :—

The freethinking Agnostic is doing his share of life's labours in helping to destroy error, and need have no fear as to the future, for certainly moral courage and truth are valued in the spirit world as being of the highest value ; and to those who have during the battle of life developed those principles, despite beliefs and creeds, is accorded power in the next life. The angels of the next world are not drawn from priests.

The following spiritual poem by Annie L. Muzzey will repay quiet perusal. It is an old message, but it is good to hear it in the fresh tones of modern messengers :—

THE UNSEEN FACE.

Come, lose thyself in Nature's deep, serene
And brooding heart, whose pulses throb and thrill
In sweet, responsive measure to the will
Of the veiled Power, whose face no man hath seen.
Forget thyself, renounce thyself, and lean
Upon a Bosom whence thou mayest distil
The balm of peace, and, lying close and still,
Learn what life's strange and mystic symbols mean.

Not in the greed and grasp of mortal gain,
Not in the rush and scramble of the race,
Is the clear message of the Spirit heard :
Cease, cease from striving, O thou world-worn brain,
And, in the silence of the Unseen Face,
Bend low, and, listening, thou shalt catch the Word.

DETECTED THROUGH A DREAM.

Dalziel's News Agency forwarded the following message by telegraph from New York, on Saturday, August 19th :—

A remarkable instance of a dream coming true is reported from St. Louis.

A woman named Mary Thornton has been detained in custody for a month charged with the murder of her husband.

She requested to see one of the judges a week ago, and told him she had dreamed that a man named George Ray murdered her husband, and at the same time gave the judge full details of the tragedy as seen in her vision. Ray was not then suspected, but the judge was so much impressed with the woman's earnestness that he caused a search to be made for Ray.

The man was found on Thursday. The judge charged him with the murder and recited the details as the woman had given them. Ray was astounded, and confessed. The woman was released.

LET no man despise the secret hints and notices of danger which sometimes are given him when he may think there is no possibility of its being real. That such hints and notices are given us, I believe few that have made any observations of things can deny ; that they are certain discoveries of an invisible world, and a converse of spirits, we cannot doubt ; and if the tendency of them seems to be to warn us of danger, why should we not suppose they are from some friendly agent (whether supreme, or inferior and subordinate, is not the question), and that they are given for our good ?—DANIEL DEFOE (in 'Robinson Crusoe').

MR. THOMAS SHORTER.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

In recording the decease of our good friend, Mr. Thomas Shorter, we briefly noted in last week's 'LIGHT' his valuable services for many years to the cause of Spiritualism. Our attention has since been called to a 'biographical sketch' recently printed by way of introduction to a little volume of verses by Mr. Shorter, entitled 'More Autumn Leaves.' This 'sketch' we have much pleasure in reproducing, as we think that many of our readers will be glad to learn more of the life-work of one who set a noble example to other Spiritualists by devoting his time and talents to the attempt in every possible way to further what he conceived to be the best interests of the people :—

The subject of this sketch was born in London, in the parish of Clerkenwell, on November 1st, 1823. Losing his father at an early age, and the mother being left with a family of young children, he had little opportunity of school education, but eagerly devoured whatever books came in his way. At eleven he began life's battle as an errand-boy with a book-auctioneer in Fleet-street. At thirteen he was apprenticed to a watch-case joint finisher, working in summer from six a.m. till eight p.m., and in winter from seven a.m. till nine p.m. There were no working men's colleges, and few mechanics' institutes in those days. The only means of mental cultivation free to him, besides such books as his scanty means could buy, were Mutual Improvement Societies, public meetings and lectures, and coffee-houses where discussions were held on questions social, political, and theological. When only about fifteen he occasionally joined in these coffee-house debates, and, in response to invitations, began to deliver public lectures. He sympathised especially with the Socialist movement, to which the impulse was given by Robert Owen, and became honorary secretary to a branch society in Finsbury. He was one of a committee of five who drew up the rules of the first Bowkett Building Society in London, and remained on its board of management till other avocations compelled him to withdraw. He joined the committee of the People's Charter Union, and took an active part in forming a small local society in Finsbury, which was its immediate precursor. His political action at one time nearly brought him into serious trouble. A grossly false report of his speech at a public meeting at Farringdon Hall appeared the following day in the 'Morning Chronicle,' in which sentiments and language of the most violent and outrageous character were imputed to him ; and on this scurrilous report a leading article was based, calling on the Government to prosecute the speaker. That this recommendation was not adopted was probably due to the circumstance that a Government reporter had made a *verbatim* report of the proceedings. An indignant letter from Mr. Shorter appeared in the 'Morning Chronicle,' but the editor declined to withdraw the offensive imputations that had been made.

The great political events of 1848, and letters on 'London Labour and the London Poor' in the 'Morning Chronicle,' gave a new impulse to inquiries into the condition of the working classes, and to efforts for its amelioration. The late Professor Maurice, Professor Kingsley, Judge Hughes, J. M. Ludlow, Dr. Furnival, and other professional gentlemen, invited certain working men, among whom were Mr. Walter Cooper, Mr. Joseph Milbank, and Mr. Thomas Shorter, to meet them in order to learn their views and feelings, and to confer with them as to any practical measures which it might be considered advisable to adopt. The outcome was the establishment, in 1850, of the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations, afterwards called the Association for Promoting Industrial and Provident Societies, and to which Mr. Shorter was appointed secretary.

Several industrial co-operative societies were formed—tailors, shoemakers, engineers, printers, bakers, pianofortemakers, &c., and a central co-operative agency was established in London (chiefly through the generous aid of the late Mr. Edward Vansittart Neale) for supplying co-operative stores throughout the country with groceries of unadulterated quality and at wholesale prices, and a correspondence was entered into with all co-operative societies in Great Britain to promote greater unity of action and mutual support. A register was also kept, giving the date of formation of each society, the number of its members, the amount of business done, and such other particulars as these societies were willing to communicate. Mr. Shorter attended, as secretary, the annual Co-operative Conferences in London, Manchester, and Leeds, and took part in the public meetings that followed them. As to the causes which led to the failure of this movement in London, it may be sufficient to say that co-operation can only be successfully carried out by co-operators, and that most of the members of

these industrial co-operative societies had no previous knowledge of co-operation, and were only interested for what they hoped individually to get from it; and a few who really cared for co-operation as a principle had little of the practical knowledge and business experience on which commercial success is so largely dependent.

The movement of 'Christian Socialism,' as it was termed, however, bore valuable fruit. Its publications, lectures, meetings, and conferences did much to spread a knowledge of the principle of co-operation, to elevate the moral tone of the workers, to diffuse a higher spirit among them, and to smooth the road for their successors. Mainly owing to the indefatigable exertions of Messrs. Hughes and Ludlow, the Industrial and Provident Societies Act was passed, by which legal protection to these societies was first obtained. The Working Men's College in Great Ormond-street, founded in 1854, was a direct outgrowth of the Christian Socialist movement, and Mr. Shorter was appointed its secretary, a position which he held till 1867, when ill-health and failing sight led him to resign the responsible office, receiving substantial evidence of the goodwill of those with whom he had so long been working.

In conjunction with Mr. W. M. Wilkinson, he established in 1860 the 'Spiritual Magazine,' to which he was a large and constant contributor; though from loss of sight in 1875, he resigned its editorship, but still remained a contributor till its close in 1878, and also to the 'Psychological Review,' a quarterly which succeeded it, but which, although ably supported by Mrs. De Morgan, Rev. J. Page Hopps, and other contributors, failed after a short time for want of adequate support. Besides numerous contributions in prose and verse to various journals, several volumes and pamphlets were written by him. Upon questions of psychical interest, and as a writer of verse, Mr. Shorter was better known under the *nom de plume* Thomas Brevior. In 1856 he published a small volume entitled 'Confessions of a Truth-seeker'; and in 1862 'The Two Worlds,' a work of some 500 closely-printed pages, the fruit of much careful reading and research; and subsequently an essay on 'What is Religion?' in which the bearings of experimental psychology in its relation to religion were considered and defined; a 'Reply to a Sermon by the Rev. John Jones, of Liverpool, entitled "Spiritualism, the Work of Demons"'; a 'Sketch of the Life of John Murray Spear'; an essay entitled 'Concerning Miracles'; a treatise on 'Immortality in Harmony with Man's Nature and Experience'; two addresses exposing the 'fallacy' of the theory of Reincarnation; an 'Address on Science and Spiritualism' at a recent conference in London, and various tracts which had an extensive circulation. We may also mention an article contributed by him to 'Chambers' Encyclopedia,' on 'Modern Spiritualism,' by invitation of its editor, at the special recommendation of Dr. A. R. Wallace. Mr. Shorter also wrote several books of verse—'Wayside Verses,' 'Echoes of Bygone Days,' 'Spring Flowers and Autumn Leaves,' 'My Confessions: Psychological Oddities,' and a volume of some 400 pages, 'Lyrics for Heart and Voice,' designed as a contribution to the Hymnal of the future.

Mr. Shorter was never a professional lecturer, but he freely gave himself to the advocacy of the spiritual philosophy from the platform, as well as in the Press. He was a promoter of the Conferences on Spiritualism in 1869, held in Lawson's Rooms, Gower street, in which Emma Hardinge took the lead—one of the most useful series of meetings in connection with the movement ever held in the Metropolis. Mr. Shorter, by request of the committee, acted as vice-president, and delivered the opening address, and, next to Emma Hardinge, he was the most frequent speaker.

On his retirement from the post of secretary to the Working Men's College in 1867, a number of friends who appreciated his services in this direction presented him with a testimonial as an expression of their sympathy and regard. His address in acknowledgment of this mark of kindness and goodwill towards him, published in the 'Spiritual Magazine' for April, 1868, is an example of his public oratory.

In addition to his writings on psychical subjects, Mr. Shorter was a contributor to other branches of journalism and literature. Among these journals we may mention 'Cooper's Journal,' 'Christian Socialist,' 'Journal of Association,' 'Weldon's Register,' 'Working Men's College Magazine,' and 'Quarterly Journal of Education,' of which latter journal he was for three years the editor; he was also for some time sub-editor of the 'London American,' a weekly newspaper devoted to the cause of the American Union during the great Civil War in the United States. Several reading books of general interest, though most of them were primarily intended for scholastic use, were compiled and edited by him. These were, 'Poetry for School and Home,' 'A Book of English Poetry,' 'A Book of English Prose,' 'Shakespeare for Schools and Families,' 'Love: a Selection of Poems from the best Poets.'

It will be seen from this brief sketch that Mr. Shorter's life was not an idle one. He was one of the earliest and most

voluminous writers on Spiritualism in this country. When the committee of the Dialectical Society began its investigation, Mr. Shorter was one of the first persons to whom they applied for information and advice, and his letter to the committee and the evidence given by him appear in its report. Though failing sight and ill-health crippled his efforts, and prevented the execution of some important works he long contemplated, his interest in all questions affecting human improvement, and especially in a broad catholic spiritual philosophy, was unabated, and to its advocacy the best powers of his mind were to the end devoted.

BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT.

FROM THE 'MORNING LEADER.'

Everyone is now familiar with the pseudonym of 'Athol Forbes,' the pen name of the eccentric Vicar of Gorleston. . . . His latest book has a wizard for its hero, and a 'Morning Leader' representative, who had a talk with the author, found that he actually believed in witchcraft.

'Certainly I do,' he said. 'There was a time when I should have said no. But I have had sufficient experience of life to cause me to change my mind. After all, it is a question of evidence. If we admit our belief in influence, the rest is a matter of degree. There are men and women whose presence, even before they speak, brightens everyone in a room. Equally true is it that there are those whose advent causes the very opposite feeling. Here, then, are forces of attraction and repulsion which cannot be explained away.'

'Everyone believes in hypnotism now,' went on 'Athol Forbes,' 'but science warred long before it committed itself to this belief. What is hypnotism but a form of witchcraft for which men and women in the olden days were burned? It will be generally agreed that Mr. Arthur Balfour is a man of a well-balanced mind. He has thought on the subject of sorcery as much as most people. He says, "We have no evidence disproving the existence of witchcraft."

'Then if we go to legal authorities we find that such practical-minded men as Coke, Bacon, and Hale approved the statutory provision on the subject.'

'That is all very well,' observed the questioner, 'but to come from the abstract and the classical to the concrete and the modern, do you yourself know of any present-day instance of the black art being actually practised?'

'Never a day goes by,' replied Mr. Forbes, 'but one or more papers of standing report cases of witchcraft. Some of the soberest papers take very serious views of the matter. I have never served in a parish yet that has not its witch or its wizard to whom people resort for advice, or to try the occult powers, which range from curing corns to casting out devils. You may smile and think it absurd that A should cause the hair to fall off the head of B, yet any medical man will tell you that the disease technically known as *alopecia areata* can be produced by mental shock. In every generation there are individuals endowed with powers not common to the multitude—mental foresight, thought-reading, faith-healing, musical instinct—all these belong to a region of research which has yet to be explored. The seers of Old Testament days—were they genuine or were they impostors? Our own experience in India tells us how mysteriously news flies in the East, how in Eastern bazaars things happening two thousand miles away are known to the natives long before Europeans have any idea of what has happened.' Mr. Athol Forbes clinched his argument with the declaration that the basis of witchcraft, of the black art generally, is mental entirely. 'It is better,' he concluded, 'that people should be superstitious than sceptical. Only despair and degradation can come from unbelief in the spirit world—that world which borders on and at times breaks in upon our own intelligence.'

THE REV. CHAS. WARE had a useful letter in the 'Echo' for August 19th, and as a consequence has had a considerable number of letters from inquirers.

MISS ROWAN VINCENT'S ILLNESS.—As we go to press we have the gratifying intelligence that Miss Rowan Vincent, although still seriously ill and likely to be so for some time to come, is progressing as favourably as her medical attendants could possibly expect.

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TRANCE AND INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKING.

WHAT THE SPEAKERS THEMSELVES SAY.

IX.

BY MR. DAVID ANDERSON.

It affords me much pleasure to respond to your request to set down what I know regarding my own mediumship. In the early stages of my development (some twenty years ago), when my friends told me of what had fallen from my lips, I took up the position that, though the messages exhibited a higher plane of mental activity than that usually manifested by me in my normal condition, yet possibly the thoughts presented were my own, the result of my previous reading, or ideas which might have lain dormant in my memory. However, I was forced to depart from that position by the many startling bits of identity that were given through me about friends known to the sitters, and incidents in the career of those who claimed to be my inspirers (which were afterwards authenticated by reference to books at the time unknown), thus establishing the personal existence and power of the spirit who controlled me. I now hold that while the spirit draws from, and makes demands upon, the knowledge which the medium possesses, even going the length of using facts and anecdotes known to the medium, yet in the elaboration of the argument itself the medium in no way participates, that the spirit in many cases supplies not only the thoughts and arguments but also the very words in which the message is clothed. In some cases where the addresses have been taken down in shorthand, the persons claiming to be the authors have said, when the matter was read over, that some of the words they had used did not give quite the shade of meaning they would like to present, and here and there they interpolated more fitting sentences. I doubt, however, if a medium, especially a trance medium, is best fitted to deal with, or is capable, personally, of throwing much light upon, the subject, for the very reason that when observation is most needed it is wanting, because the medium is in an abnormal, if not a totally unconscious, condition. Very much useful knowledge could come from those who have carefully and sympathetically followed the development of the medium; such persons can weigh the medium's mental gifts and therefore are better qualified to judge what is the extent of the spirit's action. I feel certain that my physical and mental conditions very largely influence the utterances which come through me, and that when these are not harmonious the spirit actor is 'cabined, cribbed, confined,' and no clear and satisfactory message can be given; but when I am in good physical health and free from mental worry, and can sink into a passive attitude, the messages are at once definite and clear instead of being vague and distorted. I have often been anxious that a certain sitting should be successful, but at the time some trouble has cropped up and thus the spirit friends were forced to say that they could 'do nothing which would be satisfactory, for what will be spoken will partake of the medium's feelings and memories, but let him be in a calm, passive condition, his thoughts and ideas will not assert themselves, and the passage being free from obstruction, we can give messages free from the medium's mentality.'

At times I have carried on a lengthy conversation in a European language with which I was (normally) entirely unacquainted. In those cases I could not possibly have supplied words of which I was totally ignorant!

A very large part of my medial work is in the direction of diagnosing and treating diseases. This spirit control I have for years recognised as a close and dear friend. He states that his studies in this direction received their first impulse when he was a resident on the earth; that this work was carried into the spirit realm. He admits, however, that while he has gained much new knowledge in the higher sphere, he is still indebted for much added information from those with whom he associates on the earth plane. That added knowledge cannot come from me, as my studies do not lie in that direction, valuable and useful as I recognise his work to be.

As my friends can vouch, there are times when I take up a position in argument on some philosophical or religious

question regarding which, at subsequent sittings when I am entranced, my friends on the spirit side cause me to express very opposite opinions. As my friend Mr. James Robertson has repeatedly told me, all my personal arguments have been opposed by my controls when speaking through me, and met in their own fashion. All these experiences give me assurance that we can and do receive inspiring thoughts and ideas from disembodied spirit friends—or, rather, dis-carnate spirit friends, for disembodied spirit is unthinkable. I believe also that they supply the words, and that their thoughts and ideas do not always vibrate in unison with our mental or spiritual unfoldment. I hold very pronounced views on many philosophical and religious subjects, and I know that views have been given through my lips to which I am normally absolutely antagonistic. I have to say that much of the matter given through my instrumentality is decidedly of a superior intelligence to my own, a tremendous leap forward from my present mental conditions; but again, there are intelligences who manifest their presence and personality, who reveal an inferior degree of culture to that which I think I possess, but this, of course, is to be expected, and reveals the individuality and identity of those manifesting. I hope these scrappy thoughts may be of some service to the cause which has already thrown so much light on our mental and spiritual pathway.

Next week we shall give a communication from Mr. H. A. Terry.

THE OPEN DOOR.

In 'LIGHT' of July 29th, under the heading, 'Did the Mother Fetch her Child?' an incident is related of a door opening in the room where a child lay dying. He called out, "Mamma! mamma!" the door closed, and the little one had passed to another existence.'

This reminded me of an incident in my own experience only that with me it was not an actual fact, but merely a clairvoyant vision.

It was during the last illness of one of our relatives, and I was the night nurse on the occasion. For the first hour the patient slept quietly, so I sat in an easy chair by the fire, wishing that I too could sleep. I closed my eyes and sat quietly for a short time, when suddenly I saw the room brilliantly illuminated as if by an electric light, which I saw at the head of the bed. It so startled me that I instantly opened my eyes, wondering what was the matter. The light could not possibly be any reflection from the fire, for there was not a flicker of light in it, only red cinders. Neither could it come from the outside, for the Venetian blinds were down and closed. The gas in the room, too, was turned low. Besides, a telepathic message seemed to come to me from the light, intimating the presence of a spirit friend. Again I closed my eyes, not now wishing for sleep, for I was thinking of the wonderful light which I had seen and the spirit presence I had sensed. In a few minutes I again saw the room, but this time only as by a dim light. My attention was drawn to the door, which appeared to open about four inches, letting in a flood of the same kind of electric light all round the door. While looking at this the thought came to me that it was not possible to see the whole of the door from where I was sitting, so I opened my eyes to ascertain if this were so, which I found to be the case. Again I closed them and still the vision of the open door with the light streaming into the room was as clear as at first—whereas the door in fact was shut. The light was not like an ordinary one, for there was a feeling as if a message were being conveyed by it; also I seemed to know that just outside the door spirit friends were waiting. They had not long to wait: one more night and the weary spirit was freed from the mortal form and at rest in the world of spirit. The angel of death came as with a message of love, and whispering of peace. Not as a king of terror on this occasion; but like the weary toiler who sinks to rest when the day's work is over, so did he 'fall asleep in death,' peacefully, calmly, and without fear. No wonder I sensed the comforting presence of dear spirit friends, inspiring us with the belief of a joyous resurrection, and that, therefore, all was well.

W. ILFRACOMBE.

IS THERE A DIVINE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE?

Mrs. Sara A. Underwood several years ago developed as an 'automatic writer,' and received some remarkable evidences of the presence and identity of 'the intelligent operator at the other end of the line'—to use a favourite expression of 'M.A. (Oxon.).' We have heard nothing of Mrs. Underwood's latest experiences, and the following article, which recently appeared in the 'Relgio-Philosophical Journal,' explains why she has not published any further communications, and introduces some replies to questions which will be of interest to our readers:—

'For some reason not explained to me I have not for the past two years or more been able to get much coherent automatic writing, though I have often tried to do so. Of late I have given up the attempt, thinking that the powers unseen have concluded to stop such communications, having written for me all they care to for the present. Others have told me they have had the same experience. I am the more content that this is so, as proving that my imagination, from which some contend the writing results, has nothing to do with it, as I am just as interested in regard to the writing as I was at first, only it no longer comes.'

'But there is still a residue of the original manuscripts, which, for various reasons, I have thought best not to publish, and in looking these over a while ago I came across something which, at the time it was written, I thought too fantastic and queer to put in print, as I had never heard or read anything in regard to the idea it gave expression to, but in view of later references elsewhere, I think it may be of interest to students of psychic or spiritual phenomena.'

'Mr. W. T. Stead, in one number of his now discontinued "Borderland," writing of his meeting Thomas Lake Harris while on one of his trips to America, says among other things: "When I saw him (Mr. Harris) in New York he was good enough to predict for me a life on earth of some seven centuries if I mastered the art of breathing. I have so far not made the attempt."

'The communication I speak of bears the date, "December, 1892." It opens with the question: "As you, who say you are spirits, are the governing power in this automatic writing, and we are only inquirers, anxious to learn what we can from you of the spiritual life, we would like you to give us what advice you think most useful concerning it?"'

'ANSWER: "Breathe the divine spiritual atmosphere which surrounds all spiritual souls, and you will understand without words what now seems foolish."

'QUESTION: "How may we 'breathe the divine spiritual atmosphere' of which you speak?"'

'ANSWER: "Breathe deep and long inspirations, making short pauses between your breath. Thus breathing slowly, keep your mind on the spiritual needs of your higher self, and sincerely long to be the best you are capable of. Then the spirit friend who is your guardian will use efforts to bring you, his pupils, into *rappor*t with the crowning force of the Mind Universal."

'Though this seemed strange, I did try for a few times to follow this advice. The only effect I perceived was in inducing a feeling of rest and quietude; but no other definite results followed, though, perhaps, I did not try long enough at a time. After I read, later, Mr. Stead's reference to what Mr. T. L. Harris told him in regard to "mastering the art of breathing," I again asked my unseen friends to tell me something more definite in regard to the divine atmosphere, explaining that I did not understand what was meant. I said also that I could not very well understand how mere breathing could help anyone spiritually; that it seemed fantastic to me, and would seem so to others should I speak of it.'

'ANSWER: "The mysteries of spirit life are not, at a moment's notice, to be explained to your plane. But there is a pathway to spirit spheres open to earthly pupils by means which, to your sense-bound souls, must savour of mysticism, because you do not as yet understand clearly that what to you is mystic is the most reasonable possible between a higher plane and your lower phase of being."

'QUESTION: "Will you state, clearly as you can, considering our human limitations, something more regarding the 'divine spiritual atmosphere,' in words which we can give to other inquirers?"'

'ANSWER: "When those still sense-bound, yet spiritually in *rappor*t with the spheres *lone-given* and sealed as theirs, ask searching questions of spirit friends, true answers must be given. All truly spiritually-minded souls may, while yet in earth-form, claim kindred with higher spirit spheres by obedience to spiritual law which we are bound to make known when asked by sincere souls. Therefore you may say to such that when they are in a mood of unselfish desire for spiritual help, they may, by obeying purely the hints given you as to breathing the divine spiritual atmosphere, come into direct relationship with

spirit brotherhood. This is true of all who are at one with spiritual law."

'QUESTION: "Will you tell us the most direct method by which we on this plane may breathe this divine atmosphere?"'

'ANSWER: "Speak of spiritual hopes and experiences such as you and many others have experienced by reason of spirit friendship—boldly and often. Try to live up to the unselfishness which is the germ of spiritual life, and when you feel clearly that your soul is clean and charitable, then send your most unselfish thought into the spirit world and wait with deep breathing the outcome."

'This advice outlines a most desirable state of mind and a noble plane of living, but hard to attain in a world full of opposing forces and unexpected hindrances to such utter unselfishness. It means the unsophisticatedness of a nature filled to brimming with pure lovingness and helpfulness, which is thus rendered invulnerable to the stings of ingratitude, indifference, envy, malice, and ridicule on the part of those to be helped.'

'But it is a beautiful ideal, worthy to be attempted and aspired to even if we fail in gaining it fully, and so losing that mysterious spiritual "outcome" which is hinted at in this communication. I have not yet gained it. I wonder who has? And I wonder what others who have psychic gifts know of this spiritual atmosphere by way of personal experience. If any readers can throw further light on this question I would like to see a clear statement from them concerning it.'

CONDITIONS OF SPIRIT COMMUNICATION.

I have just been reading the interesting article in 'LIGHT' of July 22nd, entitled 'States of Consciousness,' by 'H.A.D.'; and am glad to see that others are devoting special attention to the question of the conditions under which communications come from personalities that survive death. It seems to me quite obvious that the chief ordinary objections against the validity of these communications in cases like Mrs. Piper's are without foundation when these conditions are rightly appreciated.

I hope to deal with this aspect of the question more fully in future reports in the 'Proceedings' of the Society for Psychical Research, but I desire to call attention at present to a misapprehension on the part of 'H.A.D.' concerning one of my statements. I do not, indeed, say that 'H.A.D.'s' misapprehension is unjustifiable. It may be due to an obscurity of expression on my part.

Towards the close of his article 'H.A.D.' writes: 'Dr. Hodgson suggests that the evident partial loss of consciousness which accompanies these communications in trance may be accounted for possibly by the suffocating effect of gases in the human organism.'

'H.A.D.' apparently had before him the paragraph on pp. 332, 333, of my report in Part XXXIII 'Proceedings' of the Society for Psychical Research. At the end of this paragraph I wrote: 'Let him [the reader] further suppose that the part of the machine in which he is placed is filled with a more or less suffocating gas which produces a partial loss of consciousness; that sometimes this gas is much more poisonous than usual (weakness or ill health of medium); and that its effects are usually cumulative while he remains in the machine.'

I did not intend my statements here to be taken as an account of what I supposed to be the actual conditions, and it did not occur to me that they might be so interpreted. I was using an analogy simply, and did not intend to suggest that the loss of consciousness on the part of the communicator was due to any form of 'gas.' I meant to suggest only that the apparent effect upon the communicator was analogous to that which would be produced by a suffocating gas upon a still embodied human being; and the whole of the paragraph to which I refer was intended to suggest circumstances under which the *reader* might suppose himself to be, and not the actual circumstances under which the 'spirit' communicates.

RICHARD HODGSON.

5, Boylston-place, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

August 4th, 1899.

THE communication of thought and ideas from one mind to another without the use of spoken words, and that at great distances, has been practised in all ages of the world by the spiritually unfolded man.—DR. W. F. EVANS.

OFFICE OF 'LIGHT,' 110, ST. MARTIN'S LANE,
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SATURDAY, AUGUST 26th, 1899.

EDITOR E. DAWSON ROGERS.
Assisted by a Staff of able Contributors.

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THE DYING OF DEATH.

The quaint Article in 'The Fortnightly,' by Mr. Joseph Jacobs, on 'The dying of death,' although a little provoking, deserves attention. It certainly has the merit of originality, though it scores its successes, as some adroit photographers secure their effects, by screens and covers. The clever people who do that want watching. They get pictures, but they seldom present the whole truth. It is in some such way as this that Mr. Jacobs manages to convey the impression that the thought, the fear, or the reckoning in of Death is fading. 'Death,' he says, 'as a motive, is moribund.' 'Perhaps the most distinctive note of the modern spirit is the practical disappearance of the thought of death as an influence directly bearing upon practical life.' This wants consideration. It is true that in the Middle Ages death was much more obviously present, and that 'Death and the Devil ruled over all': but it does not follow that because we have got over the crude intercourse with Death and the Devil we have stuck our heads in the sand, and taken that for eluding both.

There is, however, some truth in a few of Mr. Jacobs' curious reasons for the apparent dropping out of death from our daily imaginings. It will perhaps come as a little shock to be told at the start that one of these reasons is the great improvement of modern times in sanitation and hygiene. This has not only lengthened the average duration of life, but, what is more to the point, it has made death more normal and regular, and less unnatural and catastrophic. The machine now works more smoothly, and so our attention is not so much drawn to it.

Add to this 'the hurry-scurry of modern life which leaves no time for meditation among the tombs.' The whole of our attention, in great centres, is taken up with our tasks, our pleasures, our plans and our adventures. We have hardly time for an hour and a half in any week for Church. If we can get a free hour, we yearn to break the record on a bicycle. 'We have so much to think about,' says Mr. Jacobs, 'we cannot think much about anything.' We have dropped the keeping of diaries, self-examination, contemplation, absorption. We only snatch, and rush, and forget.

So it comes to pass that, strange as it may seem, we have very largely ceased to regard death with horror. The flames of Hell are put out; the joys of Heaven are nebulous; we are getting tired. We sigh for peace, and slowly come to see that we shall find it only in the grave. So we take furtive looks at Death occasionally, and come to think of

her as 'a kindly nurse who puts us to bed when our day's work is done.' For the rest, 'what may come after is left to take care of itself.'

There is, we think, much truth also in the consideration that our herding together in great cities is slowly beating down the sense of personality. We are all so much like one another, doing the same thing, voting the same way, grinding at the same big mill, that we gradually get the sensation of being no more than cogs or wheels, or drops of oil, or jets of steam. Very few are of any particular importance here, and so it is naturally less easy to imagine that we shall be of any particular importance hereafter. 'We are realising,' says Mr. Jacobs, 'that the universe can manage to get on without us.' Living so constantly and so closely together, we get fatally used to disappearances. 'We send a wreath, and our friend drops out of our life.' Are not the streets still full,—ay! fuller than when the old, old friends first walked them in our company? It all seems so natural, so pitiless yet so calm, so inevitable: and certainly those who have disappeared seem to have escaped so much: until we say, 'Is it not better so?' So we dismiss the matter as both inevitable and veiled, and we get accustomed to the evasion we suspect is half a sin.

In so far as all this is true,—and it is true over large tracts of life,—the result is what we know as agnosticism, not necessarily militant agnosticism; but agnosticism has stunned, inattentive, hopeless, pathetic. 'The sentiment expressed on Professor Huxley's tombstone,' says Mr. Jacobs, '"It is well even if the sleep be endless," expresses a general feeling.' Hardly that: perhaps far from that; but it certainly expresses a rather widespread and probably a growing feeling:—we will add, a *passing* feeling. In our judgment, a good deal of what Mr. Jacobs calls 'the dying of death' is due to the absurd and now bankrupt notions about death which we inherited from the Dark Ages, but which are now the merest wreckage on the strand. The revulsion has been severe, and in some respects dangerous; but the return is certain. Human nature is the same as it has ever been, and, out of human nature, have hope and love and aspiration come; and hope and love and aspiration will always lead back to Life and God.

Referring to the Old Testament and the lack of faith in immortality amongst the Jews, Mr. Jacobs says that death was dying two thousand years ago, but 'he revived to rule the world almost to the present day.' 'Shall we see the revival?' he asks. 'Who knows?' Well, we think we do know. We shall not go on saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' Amid all this rampant love of luxury and greed of power, the old longings are asserting themselves; and the old needs are still there. Rachael still weeps for her children because they are not; and, behind all the apparent unconcern of the markets and the streets, hearts are breaking with their longing to know; and millions, behind the veil of agnosticism, are crying, 'O that I knew where I might find Him!'

In one sense, Mr. Jacobs has written wiser than he knew. Death is dying because we are fast learning that there is no death. All is life. We shall all learn that presently, and understand in what way it is true that

Death once dead,
There's no more dying now.

CHANGE IS THE LAW OF GROWTH.—Don't be jarred by feelings that you are liable to be inconsistent. Inconsistency is a sign of intellectual growth. It means that the soul has had a chance to peep out beneath the folds of ignorance oftentimes so carefully drawn about it by the material selfhood. Emerson condemned consistency, and he was called cold, unfeeling, and callous, but he knew, what all men learn who can change their views, that inconsistency is a mark of increasing wisdom. It is the consistent man who holds tight to the foibles, follies, and prejudices of his early life. He doesn't grow.—'Light of Truth.'

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the Exodus is dated 1491 B.C. In the 'Polychrome Bible' it is referred to the reign of Merneptah, about 1300-1266 B.C. But in Petrie's 'History of Egypt,' Vol. II., p. 32, the second year of Merenptah is given as 1206 B.C. A few years ago a *stela* was discovered, on which were inscribed a hymn of praise to Merenptah, and the names of nations subjugated by the Egyptian arms, among which was 'Israel.' As it is unlikely that Israel would be thus alluded to after they had triumphantly marched out of Egypt, and after a serious disaster had befallen the pursuing Egyptian army, it follows that this *stela* must have been inscribed not earlier than 1207 B.C. This is significant in view of the theory of Kenealy that every Naros, or cycle of 600 years, a spiritual teacher has been sent to the human race, and that the nineteenth century is the era of the twelfth. With this rectification of the Mosaic era, the theory seems to hold true, though there are a few points of detail yet to be cleared up. Further back than 1200 B.C., I do not see that history substitutes this theory, but rather the reverse: the era of Zoroaster, however, hints at a septuple Naros.

The existing Hebrew text of Exodus betrays some remarkable perplexities. In one verse the sea is 'divided' by the stretching forth of the rod of Moses; in another, a strong east wind causes the sea to 'go back,' and also to be 'divided.' It is difficult to explain how an east wind could drive the sea back (see map of Egypt), or how the Israelites could cross in the face of an east wind strong enough to 'divide' the waters. If we had the unperverted original record, we should probably find that a wind from the northwest drove the waters of the sea back, producing a phenomenally low tide, so that the Israelites crossed over where there was usually water. The Egyptians were caught by the returning tide; the first effect of which would be to soften the sand, so that their chariot wheels were torn off in their efforts to escape, as stated in verse 25.

I should like to call the attention of all scholars to the Polychrome Bible. Whatever opinion individuals may have of the 'Higher Criticism,' the translation is the best ever made. Certainly a new translation in modern classical English is needed. Here are two specimens of the Authorised Version:—

Job xxxvi. 33 : 'The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.'

Amos iv. 3 : 'And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her, and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord.'

These meaningless conglomerations of words are 'appointed to be read in churches,' and given forth to the people by the clergy as the word of God !

Had the translators candidly confessed that the text was sometimes corrupt and untranslatable, as the editors of the Polychrome Bible have done, they would have shown themselves both honest and wise; as it is, they are blind leaders of the blind.

The idea of the Israelites casting cows into the palace, or the cows casting the Israelites into the palace, whichever it may be, is intensely comic !

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PORTRAIT OF MRS. PIPER.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Hodgson we have received an admirable portrait of Mrs. Piper, which we shall reproduce—specially printed on plate-paper—as a supplement to next week's 'LIGHT.' Friends who desire to have extra copies should intimate their wish to us at once lest a later application should prove unavailing, as the number printed will be determined by the orders which we receive.

MR. JOHN BENT, of Leicester, passed into spirit life on July 23rd, in his seventy-sixth year. He was a trance speaker of considerable ability and an earnest and faithful worker for the local society for upwards of twenty years.

THE PSYCHIC BODY.*

Those who have much interest in psychical subjects and but little leisure for pursuing them would do well to possess themselves of M. Delanne's recent work, 'L'Ame est Immortelle.*' In rather more than four hundred pages he has collected a large amount of testimony, old and new, in support of the belief in the persistence of the soul after death embodied in a psychical organism. He appeals to various kinds of evidence, drawn from various countries; and his narratives are well grouped and are selected as typical instances of classes of phenomena. He thus avoids diffuseness, which would make the book unsuitable for people with little leisure. At first, when we opened the volume and saw the variety of the authorities referred to, scientific and philosophical, past and present, it seemed as if its perusal should be a winter study and not an August holiday task, but we found we were mistaken.

The simplicity of aim, the clear, direct style of the writing, and the great interest attaching to the facts recorded, render the task of reading the book thoroughly attractive; the difficulty is rather to know when to put it down. For it is a book which ought not to be read without judicious pauses; it is suggestive and calculated to stimulate thought; and unless it provokes the reader to compare and reflect and question it is more or less wasted on him. Not that it is a deep book at all, such as 'Phantasms of the Living'; and it has this advantage over the latter work (now unfortunately out of print), that its aim is more limited and it is less loaded with theory. Probably the larger work is of more permanent value to the student, but for the ordinary reader, the extent of its scope is bewildering; it makes demands upon his concentration of attention and patience beyond what he can easily meet. 'L'Ame est Immortelle' draws many of its evidential narratives from the 'Phantasms,' but M. Delanne has imposed upon himself limitations which make his book more readable and more likely to be popular. He is not seeking to present a large accumulation of evidence on all sorts of abnormal psychic phenomena; his purpose is to show that what he calls the perispirit or psychic body actually exists as an organic part of all beings, and all the evidence that he cites bears upon this particular point.

He reminds us in his introduction that science has never been able to explain the fact of memory. Since brain tissue is constantly undergoing waste and repair, wherein are impressions registered? By what means are we able to revive the memory of events which caused changes in the substance of our brains twenty years ago, since none of the substance which then received the impressions remains? In M. Delanne's opinion, the problem is partly solved by the discovery of the existence of the fluidic or psychic organism, which is a link between the physical body and the inner spirit; in the subtle substance of this organism are registered, as he believes, the phenomena of mental life.

If we have grasped his meaning, he regards the psychical body as taking up the physical into itself; he thinks it more correct to say that the psychical contains the physical than that the physical encloses the psychical. At first this may seem fanciful; but it is a suggestion worthy of consideration, and it is not out of harmony with what we know of the cosmic order. We may illustrate our conception of his theory by a simple analogy. When an acorn falls from the parent tree and begins a new life as a differentiated individual, it takes into itself out of the earth the inorganic mineral substance which it requires for its development. The organic vegetable is not enclosed in the mineral, though it infuses it with its life; it is truer to say that the inorganic substance is contained in the higher organism of the vegetable. So, according to this theory of the relation of our psychic to our physical body, the psychical is not converted into the physical, but the physical is taken into the psychical; the higher order of organism comes down into matter and accretes to itself substance out of this lower atomic order; but it is not altogether limited to it, nor is it dependent on it for its existence, although, during this stage of its evolution, energy and consciousness are mainly

* 'L'Ame est Immortelle.' By GABRIEL DELANNE. Published by Chamuel, 5, Rue de Savoie, Paris.

concentrated in the lower organism, just as (to return to our analogy) the acorn in the earlier stage of its growth concentrates its energies in making root.

In M. Delanne's opinion, the physical organism makes impressions on the psychical which are never lost ; they are stored in it, somewhat as memories are stored, i.e., the images which the physical body once expressed can be reproduced at will by the fluidic. In this way he accounts for the diverse forms which apparitions assume ; these forms are merely reproduced as a means of recognition and to prove identity.

Whether his theory is correct or not, it is distinctly interesting, and some of the facts he presents lend themselves to its support ; for instance, there is a very interesting chapter in the middle of his volume on M. de Rochas' experiments in connection with the exteriorisation of sensation, but it would require an expert and a separate article in order to discuss it at all adequately. Many of the phenomena included under the name of psychism lead us to the conclusion that the ethereal organism is more developed and has larger capacities than the physical, not merely latent embryonic capacities but active, developed faculties ; and the completer development suggests the anterior evolution of the psychical organism. This, of course, is quite in keeping with the philosophic beliefs of the past. Plotinus, as M. Delanne points out, taught that the soul acquires in the spirit sphere a psychic body before attaching itself to a physical one, and Porphyry calls this body the vehicle of the soul. We are reminded by this theory of that impressive, profound sentence in the old Latin formula :—

'Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.'

That sentence contains a far-reaching cosmic principle, for evolution is effected by taking up the lower into the higher; it is a royal ascent from the mineral to the Divine, an ascent involving a previous descent, for the less cannot evolve the greater until the greater has taken hold on the less and identified itself with it. If this is the cosmic order and man is the microcosm of the universe, we may expect to find that the history of his evolution is a type of that order.

The first chapter of the work is devoted to tracing the doctrine of a psychical embodiment in the teaching of ancient philosophies and the writings of later noted thinkers. M. Delanne's review of these philosophies is somewhat cursory but were it less so it would probably, whilst being interesting to students, be wearisome to the ordinary reader. From a funeral hymn in the Rig-Veda he quotes :—

'Let Thy flame, Thy splendour consume it ; with those glorious members which Thou hast given him bear him to the world of the virtuous.'

In the Egyptian philosophy he traces, in addition to the outer covering of the atomic body, a threefold division of man ; (1) the 'Ka,' a second body believed to share largely in the conditions of the physical, for which food was provided in the sepulchres ; (2) the 'Rhou,' a mental sheath corresponding to what we call 'soul' or 'mind' ; (3) the 'bai,' a luminous essence corresponding probably to what we denote as 'spirit.' M. Delanne does not point out the close correspondence which there is in this Egyptian philosophy with that taught by the Hindu Kapila, in the Sankhya system.* This system recognises these four parts of man : the physical body ; the 'linga sharira,' a substance grosser than the ethereal body but finer than the physical, which enables the spirit to sustain its connection with matter ; the 'linga' or psychic body ; and the spiritual essence.

When we find such close resemblances in the teaching of various races, we are bound to ask the reason for them. Two alternatives suggest themselves as explanations ; either these races derived the ideas from one another, or they originated from a common source. If the latter is the true explanation, what was that source ? Was it the sphere whence now emanate many automatic writings, and inspirational messages ? In these automatic writings the same division of the personality is indicated, although under different names. The 'linga-sharira' or 'Ka' is called the 'nerve-spirit,' 'perisprit,' or, as in Mrs. Underwood's interesting

book of 'Spirit Writings,' 'sensory ducts.' It seems to be identical with what we call 'aura.' We are told that these sensory ducts slowly disappear as the Ego progresses ; therefore we can understand why communications on the physical plane cease after a time, as a spirit rises higher.

We have lingered over this philosophical part because the subject is attractive ; but the chief value of M. Delanne's work certainly does not lie here, but in the facts and scientific experiments which he has brought together. Some of the most striking incidents relate to the appearances of persons during sleep. Some of these, and indeed many of his illustrations are drawn from 'Phantasms of the Living.' In the chapter headed 'A Study of the Soul under Magnetism,' the following interesting conversation is narrated. It is taken out of Chardel's 'Physiologie du Magnétisme.' The patient Lefrey was in the magnetic sleep, when the following remarks passed between her and her magnetiser. We select this almost at random as a specimen of the sort of illustration M. Delanne presents. Where all are interesting it is difficult to make a selection for quotation :—

'On one occasion Lefrey, in a somnambulic state, had dictated to her magnetiser some therapeutic prescriptions ; then, in a singular tone, she said : "You understand that *he* is giving me the order ?" "Who orders that ?" said the doctor. "He does, don't you hear him ?" "No, I neither hear nor do I see anyone." "Ah ! of course !" she replied, "you are asleep, whilst I am awake." "Indeed ! you are dreaming, my dear ; you fancy that I am asleep, whilst really my eyes are wide open, and I hold you under my magnetic influence, and it depends entirely on my will when I shall restore you to your previous condition. You imagine you are awake because you are talking to me, and because, to a certain extent, you have control over yourself ; nevertheless, you cannot open your eyes." (She resumes) : "You are asleep, I repeat ; I, on the contrary, am almost as completely awake as we shall all be at a future day. I will explain myself : All that you are capable of seeing is gross and material. You recognise the apparent form, but the real beauties escape you ; I, on the other hand, whose corporeal sensations are for the moment suspended, whose soul is nearly completely disengaged from ordinary affairs, I see what is invisible to your eyes ; I hear what your ears cannot ; I understand what is incomprehensible to you. For instance, you do not see what passes from you to me when you magnetise me ; I see it very clearly. At every pass you make I see little columns of fire-dust emanate from the tips of your fingers, and incorporate themselves in me, and when you isolate me, I am almost surrounded by an atmosphere glowing with this same fire-dust. When I wish I can hear distant sounds, sounds vibrating a hundred miles away ; in a word, I do not need that objects should come to me, I can go to them, wherever they may be, and I can make a far truer estimate of them than anyone could do who was not in a condition analogous to mine."

Accounts of the appearances of beings incarnate and discarnate are, of course, introduced as illustrations, and some of them are remarkable ; but we are inclined to think that as evidence of the *particular point* M. Delanne is substantiating, he rather overrates their value. The argument he deduces from these apparitions seems to us unsatisfactory. On p. 165 he states his conviction that the psychic body has an organ of speech ; he calls it a 'phonetic machine.' We do not dispute his statement, but it seems to us that when he bases it upon the fact that apparitions are heard to speak, his evidence is inconclusive. If, as we suppose, he means that psychic organisms have organs of articulation by which they produce air vibrations, as we do when we speak, then we think that his statement is non-proven. For articulation is, as we all know, merely a method of manipulating the air so as to produce vibrations, which, when they impinge on the ear, convey to the *mind*, by the apparatus of nerves, the impression of sound ; an immaterial impression is for an infinitesimally small moment latent in a physical movement ; but the fact that the *mental* impression of sound is thus produced does not prove that it cannot be produced in any other way. There may be many other ways in which that impression can be made upon the mind ; we can hardly think that it is always necessary for a mind on the psychic plane to use our grosser aerial substance and physical nerves in order to convey to another mind the impression of sound, which, after all, is *not* a physical but a mental impression. We do not deny that spirits may thus use physical air-waves, or that they have phonetic machines ; we

* Kapila is believed to have lived about 600 B.C.

only say that the evidence M. Delanne deduces for this seems to us insufficient to prove that they have. Philosophically we cannot conceive that differentiated spirit, retaining individuality, can act upon environment otherwise than by an organism of some sort ; anything else is unthinkable, and we welcome all the facts M. Delanne brings together which corroborate this belief, by showing that discarnate spirits retain their individuality and are in as direct relation with environment as are those in the flesh. But this is applying M. Delanne's evidence for a spiritual organism in a somewhat different way from that in which he applies it. With all due deference to his wider experience, we think that in this particular his way of applying it is not quite sound. But if we cannot follow him in this detail many of the other parts of his argument are most cogent. Perhaps one of the most fascinating chapters is that in which he deals with the evidence supplied by the experiments of M. de Rochas and Dr. Luys, also those of M. Bourru and M. Burot. It is quite impossible to give in a few words an adequate idea of the interesting character of this chapter. Many psychics have affirmed that when the spirit leaves the body during trance or sleep, it is still connected with it by a luminous cord, and were this broken death would ensue. M. de Rochas' experiments in exteriorisation of sensibility corroborate this statement by proving, not only that sensation can be experienced outside the physical organism, but that it can be extended in certain definite directions, the connection being in some way maintained between the furthest point and the physical body. The chapter should be read in its entirety, in order to get any complete idea of its bearings ; we can do no more than touch on one of these experiments.

When M. de Rochas magnetised his subject, concentric luminous rings became apparent to the eyes of another hypnotised person present. They were invisible to normal vision, but the presence of these external radiations was attested by the fact that when the magnetiser touched the sphere in which they were described to be, the subject felt the sensation.* A glass of water was introduced into the radius of the luminosity and became irradiated, the rings of sensibility immediately behind the glass becoming obscure. The glass was withdrawn to some distance, and whilst held at this distance the subject was conscious of any touch upon the water.

A still more elaborate experiment was carried out by photography, with the result that the exteriorised sensibility of the subject was retained upon the photographic plate for two days, so that the subject suffered when the hand, imaged on the photograph, was violently pricked, and bore on her physical hand the trace of the injury. M.M. Bourru and Burot's experiments with medicines are not less extraordinary. The effects produced by medicines (enclosed in bottles) introduced into the sphere of sensibility were similar, it is stated, to those which would have been produced by taking the medicines into the physical organism. The import of these extraordinary facts can only be unravelled by continued research and reflection, but we think M. Delanne may fairly claim that they appear to lend strong support to the belief that an ethereal organism forms an integral part of the human personality, and that this fact may explain much that seems at present incomprehensible. On the value of the scientific parts of the book we do not feel competent to pronounce an opinion, beyond saying that they are by no means the least attractive and interesting portions of this very interesting volume.

We might go on quoting almost indefinitely, but these few citations will suffice to show the character of the work and the sort of interest that attaches to it, and to convey the impression that its value consists mainly in the fact that it focusses a great deal of evidence from various sources ; it will be readily understood that the value of the evidence when brought together is very much increased by the opportunity thus afforded for considering one part of it in connection with another.

H. A. D.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.—'LIGHT' may be obtained from Mr. W. H. Terry, Austral Buildings, Collins-street E.

* Whilst in this condition touches on her physical body were not felt.

THE SUNSHINE OF THE SPIRIT.

The following thoughts, which appeared in the 'Light of Truth,' proclaim the sunny philosophy which the world so much needs to-day. The development of compassionate sympathy, and the growth of the altruistic spirit, are apt to make us look too exclusively on the dark side of life, and, growing sensitive to the ignorance, the squalid misery and the keen struggles which so many of our brethren experience, we become morbid and despairing. But the pessimist gets the sum wrong, his total is not correct, because he leaves out a great many of the compensations of life. The landscape beneath the clouds looks dark and forbidding, but, when lit by the sunshine, it appears inviting and beautiful. So we need the sunshine of knowledge of the spirit and of human immortality to enable us to be cheerful, thankful, helpful, and loving :—

'Cultivate thankfulness and cheerfulness. An ounce of good cheer is worth a ton of melancholy. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Cultivate to the last the ability to love, realise to the fullest that the greatest thing in the world is love. Be like the curate of Olney, who said of himself "he could live no longer than he could love." Without love there is no joy in life. Let us as we grow older realise the need not only of work, a proper physical and mental occupation, but of play, recreation, and study. Let the work be as far as may be in the direction of helping others to help themselves. Nothing keeps one young like thinking of and having a sympathy for others. Canon Farrar was quite right when he said : "We often do more good by our sympathies than by our labours, and render to the world a more lasting service by absence of jealousy and recognition of merit than we could ever hope to accomplish by the straining efforts of personal ambition." In the cultivation of a sympathetic heart we do ourselves more good than those we serve. As we grow old, let us cultivate a sympathy for the world at large, for its weaknesses, for the young, and the returns will come to us a hundred-fold. The world ever gives us freely that which we give to it.'

'No sweeter epitaph was ever written for an aged one on marble shaft than one noted, I think by Oliver Wendell Holmes, a tribute of an aged husband to his life companion, viz. : "She was so pleasant." Yes, let us, like the author of the first Epistle to the Corinthians (which, by the way, is the sweetest love-letter ever written by mortal man or woman), determine to grow old gracefully along the lines of love. It will be remembered (says Drummond) that in the beginning love was not the strongest point of Paul, indeed his hand was stained with blood ; but the observing student can detect a beautiful tenderness growing and ripening all through his character as he gets old, inspiring that same hand to write : "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three ; but the greatest of these is love." As we grow old let us not forget that we shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that we can do, or any kindness that we can show to any human being, let us do it now. Let us not defer it or neglect it, for we shall not pass this way again.'—DR. I. N. LOVE.

GHOSTS AND VISIONS.—In a leading article in the 'Shields Morning Mail' of August 19th, the writer takes Miss Freer's book, 'Essays on Psychical Research,' as his theme, and concludes with the following significant statement : 'And, let us say, that neither man nor woman has a title to discuss those things, and say that they are the product of a disordered brain, simply because nothing of the kind has come within the radius of their vision or consciousness. There need be no wonder that some people are shut out from association with what they cannot handle, taste, smell, or see. In this day there need be no hesitation in confessing that there is another or other realms than tangible Nature—that there are other facts than the logician will admit—that there are other and vital experiences and realisations than the Euclid-bound scientist will allow. Frivolous quips do not dispose of them. Sober inquiry is the becoming attitude. Men and women are coming down from the mountain every day with shining faces.'

PHOTOGRAPHIC DIAGNOSES.—Commandant Tégrad, who is well known for his scientific discoveries, and also as an earnest Spiritualist, contributes to 'L'Humanité Intégrale' an account of some successful experiments he has made in photographing the emanations from his two invalid daughters ; and these justify him, he says, in anticipating that the day will come when patients can be diagnosed by photographic plates. 'In the same way,' he adds, 'I believe that a man believed to be dead, and who is only cataleptic, need not be buried before he has been submitted to the photographic plate ; which it will only be necessary to apply to his forehead, or to his heart, for a few hours, in order to ascertain whether there is any life remaining. The plate will answer yes or no, according to the presence or the absence of any effluvia of the vital fluid.'—'Harbinger of Light.'

[August 26, 1899.]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed by correspondents and sometimes publishes what he does not agree with for the purpose of presenting views that may elicit discussion.

Miss Read and the Stuffed Glove.

SIR,—It is with much reluctance that I add one word more to what is likely to prove but a fruitless controversy, for how is it possible to determine whether the fraud was voluntary or not? A trick has been played, but by whom? Miss Read says she did it with her own hands, but under pressure from without. Mr. Bassett doubts this, and to enforce his view of the case, announces his conviction that all the phenomena he has witnessed at the Reads' have been spurious. To acknowledge Miss Read to be a genuine medium, would compel Mr. Bassett also to admit that 'evil influence' is a possible factor, and one that *has* to be reckoned with.

'It would appear that your inability to see the operations of these adversaries renders you unable to grasp their existence, or to appreciate the magnitude of their influence in your world.' ('Spirit Teachings,' 231.) Under these circumstances surely the most desirable thing to do in the judgment of *everyone* concerned, is to *prove* that Miss Read is the medium she professes to be, and that we say we *know* her to be. Mr. Chantrill writes that he is 'in a far more advantageous position to judge of the Reads' phenomena' than I am. I do not think so, for he appears always to have sat at the house of the medium and to have sat in darkness, while we have sat in our own house, have provided our own musical toys, have never sat in *complete* darkness, and have often sat in a strong light. In a *good* light, with just two or three intimate friends or relatives, we have had manifestations in such force and abundance as to make doubt of their origin impossible, not to mention the fact that Miss Read was sitting motionless—her elbows on the table very often and her hands supporting her chin, in full view of everyone.

I imagine that Mr. Bassett would rather discover in Miss Read a medium—open to influence both good and evil—than a simple and shameless impostor, and that consequently he would be glad to submit this question to the further attention of experts? I cannot conceive my testimony to be of less value than his. On three separate occasions the Reads have stayed in our house for periods varying from three to fourteen days at a time, and my opportunities for close scrutiny have been many. But for this I should never have invited larger gatherings to attend and witness phenomena in a far more subdued light than we found necessary when alone, or nearly so. As it is I have the satisfaction of believing our friends were not imposed upon, whatever they may now think to the contrary. I hope this disaster will not prevent Mrs. and Miss Read from again visiting us some day. My house is at their disposal should they desire to give any test séances to friends in this neighbourhood. What Miss Read's feeling in the matter may be I cannot say. She takes little or no interest in Spiritualism as a cause, dislikes sitting excessively, and is sometimes rather painfully and hysterically affected while so doing, to which may be added the *risk* she runs.

'We never advise any of unbalanced mind to meddle with the mysteries of mediumship. It is direful risk to them.' ('Spirit Teachings,' p. 241.) May I commend to the notice of all Section XXIX. in this valuable book? That is what I lament to find so ill-digested, and not *phenomena*, as Mr. Chantrill misrepresents.

I conclude with the hope that, should temptation in any form again assail Miss Read, she may find the strength to say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

E. BROWNE.

SIR,—In the letters published in your last issue I find much that could well have been omitted, having no particular bearing on the point at issue, but evidencing a vindictive attempt to defame those who have for years worked honourably in the cause of Spiritualism. To one or two items, however, I would like to call attention.

Mr. Bassett says: 'Suffice it to say that during two years and numerous sittings I have not seen anything that could not be done by trickery.' That is no evidence. In 'Two Worlds,' September 9th, 1898, he said: 'We, the undersigned, testify to the genuineness of the phenomena which took place in our presence, *under strict test conditions and in the light*, on September 2nd, 1898.—Signed, H. BASSETT and eight others.'

Most of the phenomena, as is well known, are out of range of the medium. The violin is raised to the ceiling, and striking it, immediately passes underneath the table. A tall man cannot do this standing up, the height from the floor being 9ft. 6in. The medium is seen sitting down. Hands of *all sizes* appear, from one large enough to hold a man's head, to the baby hand. They change constantly and cannot *all* be the medium's hand, even if free. Mr. Chan-

trill, in 'Two Worlds,' May 5th, 1899, said: 'I have seen and felt all kinds of hands, with and without a cabinet. At another séance I was *close up* to the curtains of the cabinet, with the medium *outside*. A materialised hand took hold of my arm, and another hold of my first finger on the same arm, and drew it into the cabinet, when, to my surprise, I felt the pressure of teeth.' There is a distinction between the clapping of one hand on the wall, and the clapping of two hollow palms. The clapping hands are two hands attached to the same limb at the wrist. I have seen them formed over the table in the presence of visitors. Mr. Bassett says: 'I caught Miss Read's arm while she was lifting articles from the piano to the table. I felt all the motions in the hand I held while she fingered the piano with the other.' Mr. Chantrill, giving a description of this same experiment in 'Two Worlds,' May 5th, 1899, said: 'I have sat next to the medium without any cabinet, round a table, with our backs to a piano. I had hold of one of the medium's hands, and a friend of mine the other. The table cloth was pulled off, and fell to the ground in a heap—underneath this a partly materialised form gradually built itself up and then played well-known tunes on the piano. This took place between the medium and myself, the piano being about two feet from us. At this sitting my friend and I were each given a flower out of a heavy glass ornament, by a materialised hand. Later, the ornament, which stood on the piano, was moved bodily on to the table.' How easily could Mr. Bassett have been mistaken when he felt the projected limb moving the articles, as it is well known that materialisation is an exteriorisation of some portion of the medium which in the first place is the exact counterpart of that part of the medium's body from which it is projected. How many times have I seen the medium's *double* and how many more have witnessed the same thing! In this case the article on the piano was out of reach of the medium. Then again, what of séances that have been prepared in strange houses, with strange apparatus, and without the knowledge of the medium? She would walk in and take her seat, when the manifestations would commence immediately with articles purposely placed quite beyond her reach. All this is recorded by some of the most forward people in the movement.

Mr. Bassett says: 'The playing of three bells is a very easy matter,' but add the concertina playing and the hands clapping simultaneously at County-chambers. Then he makes a great point of the bell with a short handle, manipulated by the toes. He is well aware that in the winter, in frost and snow, the medium would walk into the séance-room at County-chambers late, when all the company was waiting for her, and with high laced boots, would sit down without removing hat or cloak, and the bells would ring immediately they were thrown into the cabinet by himself. One very cold evening the medium was wearing a close-fitting jacket trimmed with fur, and Mr. Bassett called attention to seeing the materialised arm *bare to the shoulder*.

Mr. Chantrill *dares* me to say he did any trick at the séances. I can give him the name and address of one on whom he played tricks at a general séance, and which he spoke about at its close.

Mr. Cutler's 'reliable and authentic information' that two séances daily were given at Blackpool, 2s. 6d. received from each visitor, although of no consequence, is *utterly untrue*.

The next point raised which calls for comment is the money question: and supposing we did get £10 a week, whose business is that? The fact is, for ten years we gave the evidence entirely free; then, when our time was so much taken up by it, we charged a small fee. In 1898 we gave 168 séances to 1,350 sitters; 78 of these séances were for the benefit of different societies and individuals, a great proportion of the others were free, and a few were well paid for. We hold the receipts from the societies for the donations, which amount to a good sum. From those who have well paid come the assurances of confidence, and our defenders are amongst the most experienced students in the cause. These pearls have been offered at too low a price. That which costs money has a value set upon it, but that which comes for nothing is of no worth. In 'Two Worlds,' May 26th, 1899, Mr. Bassett said: 'I have seen in private home circles, where it has not cost me a single farthing, what some would not be shown for double the challenge price of your correspondent, and what would not be permitted in a promiscuous public circle. The medium could make a fortune if it were trickery.' If I were wealthy I would insist upon a substantial fee, on the principle that all mediums should be well rewarded for their services. They suffer enough from those they try to benefit. My daughter of herself is a pure-minded, obliging, sympathetic girl, of exceptional industry; this her worst enemies will admit. When in the abnormal state, being led to deceive is a proof of her submission to imposed influence, for which she gets personally vituperated.

In replying to Mr. Terry an interesting feature crops up. He is a platform medium, with very high controls. He

brought his friends for a series of six séances. Every privilege was accorded him, and he afterwards published a long account of the phenomena, but *now* feels uncertain about the truth of it, and withdraws his statement. I maintain that the phenomena were all genuine. Why not? The conditions were very harmonious and the manifestations excellent. Mr. Terry usually opened with an appropriate invocation, and closed with a control of his guides, extolling the phenomena, stating they were all genuine, and much more. Descriptions of operators, &c., were given by Mrs. Terry and others. But in Mr. Terry's own words I would say to him, 'Where are we?' If the phenomena were true your control was also true to support them; but if *false*, then your control was false, and 'If you were under baneful influence on these occasions how are we to know you are not so on other occasions?' Now, how is it to be, Mr. Terry? We stand or fall together, and in company with other forward mediums, who have sat and described the operators and surroundings in a similar manner.

With your correspondent who calls himself 'Common Sense' I cannot but agree on many points, but I think Mr. Page Hopps admirably sums up the whole matter in a few words. He says: 'Miss Read ought to stand to her guns and challenge them to test her.' She has done so pretty well. The only remark I heard her make on the night of the seizure was, 'Have a test séance and prove I am not a fraud.' She was afterwards foolish enough, or ladylike enough, to send a written apology to Mr. Bassett, also offering a *test séance*, but they have had any amount of tests in every way they wished, and of what use are they to them? Time back, with other investigators, she submitted to a number of test séances, even with all the sitters tied to the table-top, herself secured hands and feet; luminous stars on head and chest, and luminous rings on fingers. She then had manifestations. Is that to go for nothing? Certainly. Each one will say, I, the important I, was not present. It is impossible to satisfy everyone with the same conditions. What is a test to one, is worthless to another. For that reason we have endeavoured to give this wonderful evidence to *all*, irrespective of conditions, having developed the medium in consciousness and view, considering that a sufficient test to all reasonable people. Every sitter must form his own opinion from his own point of view. We never ask anyone to sit. We accord the privilege to those who ask for it, and we never try to cram our own ideas into other people's heads. We tell them to go home and think over what they have witnessed, if worth a thought, and work out their own estimate.

So in the end, it all amounts to this: All genuine mediums are sensitive to the influences imposed by spirits discarnate or incarnate, and as in both states are all degrees of good, the best of mediums can, at times, either in the conscious, sub-conscious, or unconscious state, be made instruments of deceit. Psychics cannot be worked out by physics, neither can we change natural law. Still, we cannot ignore facts, and it is only by learning to work in accord with natural law that we can ever hope to avoid the deceit.

'So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown.'

BIRMINGHAM.

W. H. READ.

SIR,—Mr. Bassett quotes a passage from a letter of mine, with a somewhat misleading result, owing to his having clipped the sentence and freed it from context. As he quotes it in vindication of the important charge as to psychologising the medium, I feel it my duty to send you herewith press copy of my letter (a private one) and to quote the context: 'Looking at the matter psychically I can see that you have raised a hell around the Reads and around yourselves, and you are now feeling, or you will feel, this to be so. *Of the three*, I find greatest sympathy with yourself,' &c.

Further, Mr. Bassett's assertion that I have told him 'the harm publication would do the cause' is a direct perversion of the truth. I myself published the last 'exposure' for the good of the cause as throwing light on it, and what I said of this case was that it should be gone more carefully into before publication, quite another matter, the wisdom of which Mr. Bassett will realise if Mr. Hopps's view is adopted; and I may say I entirely bow to that view, considering the great experience of its author.

The above example of Mr. Bassett's method of manipulating evidence will be a deterrent to hasty conclusions on the part of Spiritualists of any high intuition.

BRIAN HODGSON.

SIR,—I have read with much interest, and I must say considerable amusement, the correspondence upon the above subject in your recent issues, July 29th and August 19th.

I take it that I may understand from Mr. Bassett's assertions as to how the phenomena are produced, that he is now prepared to explain all, and if so, being an old sitter

with this family, I should be glad if he will be so good as to satisfy my curiosity on a few points.

1. How is the bell rung by Miss Edith Read with her foot, the bell being at ceiling level in a room ten feet high, when I stood at her back, and had both her hands and also those of her mother?

2. What is his explanation of the different sized hands that can be grasped in the cabinet by any investigator, whilst Miss Edith Read's hands, together with those of her mother, are on the luminous card?

3. I suppose that Mr. Bassett has seen the luminous tape held by two sitters at the bottom end of the table and the other end at the ceiling level in the cabinet, and almost making a complete circle. At the same time as this is going on, a bell is being rung and a violin being strummed in the cabinet.

These are only a very few questions that I should like this gentleman to explain away.

I may say that I have been an old sitter with this family for some years before Messrs. Bassett, Cutler, and Chantrill came upon the scene. I have been present at test séances with other students in the cause, when the medium, her mother, and all the sitters but one outsider have had their hands tied and fastened down to staples driven into the table, and the medium decorated with luminous discs and stars upon the head and chest and bracelets upon the wrists, and yet we have had the bell ringing at ceiling level and an old banjo being carried round the table and played.

I for one shall not allow these three gentlemen to judge for me of the truth of these phenomena, as I would sooner base my opinions upon my own experiments. The money question in the above seems to be a great item in the matter with these gentlemen, as they tell of the shillings they have paid, but not of what they got in return for the same, viz., use of drawing and séance rooms, refreshments *ad lib.*, use of piano, fire, and light till one and two o'clock in the morning, together with a séance, all thrown in for one humble shilling. It may appear very mean to mention this, but I understand from the family that these young men were *never asked for money*, they giving the shilling of their own free will; but yet they try to make it appear that they were defrauded out of their miserable shilling.

The medium has not fallen one inch in my estimation for the one small slip she has made. I had always, and shall have, a great amount of respect for her, seeing her willingly sit under most trying circumstances at test séances, freely submitting to all kinds of investigation without the least murmur. I have known her intimately for years, in fact from the time when she was a young girl just from school up to the present time, and I can safely say that a more honourable, honest, straightforward, trustful, and thoroughly virtuous girl it would be impossible to meet anywhere.

Should Mr. Bassett be able to prove that Miss Edith Read is the clever conjurer that he vaguely asserts her to be, I intend to make a bid for this lady and to act as her business manager, and to make a tour of the chief towns of the country giving exhibitions of her wonderful skill.

AN OLD SITTER.

[All the parties to this controversy having now, we hope, had fair play, it is time that the correspondence should be closed. Mr. Bassett, having opened the discussion, must, of course, be allowed to reply if he wishes, but we trust he will be as brief as possible, and that he will not introduce new issues necessitating further explanations.

—ED. 'LIGHT.'

The 'Stuffed Glove' and its Lessons.

SIR,—I have no desire to prolong the controversy on the Reads' stuffed glove case, and although I have absolutely nothing to do with these séances, there are sufficient reasons why I should venture to trouble you with a letter, inasmuch as on previous occasions I have been subject to much annoyance and misunderstanding by a number of people who, knowing that I was connected with the work of the Birmingham Spiritualist Union, came to the erroneous conclusion that I was in some way responsible for the proceedings of which they complained, and more than one called upon me to know *what I had done with the money obtained at these séances!* And as letters from members of our Union were excluded from a contemporary, this notion became prevalent until we were reluctantly compelled to advertise a disclaimer embodied in a resolution sanctioned by a members' meeting. Not that we affirmed or denied the validity of the phenomena, nor do I do so now; but in the interest of Spiritualism and the furtherance of the cardinal object of our Union, it is a duty that has been continually thrust upon other members of the executive and myself to discountenance improper conduct of séances, which foster conditions where fraud *can* be practised and the real nature of the phenomena *cannot* be proven. These continual disturbances and the repeated allegations of fraud have a most disastrous effect upon the progress of a permanent

organisation that seeks to establish Spiritualism as a consistent, rational, and religious movement that will be acceptable to temperate and level-headed men and women. We do not wish to speak in condemnatory terms, nor pose as moral custodians, but few are aware to what an extent the spiritual movement has suffered in Birmingham by the indiscretions of enthusiasts.

In conclusion, let me say that while Mr. Bassett has acted only as an honourable man could act in publishing the details of his seizure of the 'glove,' I am strongly of opinion that all who have kept up this utterly irrational craze for phenomena under such loose and uncertain conditions have themselves been the chief factors in the results that have ensued.

A. J. SMYTH.

Hyllmor, Greenhill-road, Moseley.

'Tract Distribution.'

SIR,—I was pleased to read the letter of your correspondent, Mr. A. Janes, in 'LIGHT' of August 19th. The tract referred to, 'What is Spiritualism?' ought to be read by everyone in the British Empire. I have had opportunity of distributing some in each of the cases issued (through Mr. Janes' kindness) since March, and shall continue to do so. Therefore, anyone receiving my parcel of a score of tracts will have this one and an assortment of others.

I have had the privilege of sending these cases of tracts of the Midland Spiritual Tract Enterprise (though not to New Zealand) to Australia and America and now wait further orders.

Will you permit me to say that, by way of ending the holiday season, I will send one of these packages to any who will spare time and the expense of a post card, who desire to have them to distribute (*post free*), until the end of the present month, after which time the price must be threepence as before? I only request a distinct legible address.

BEVAN HARRIS.

Radcliffe-on-Trent.

Fraudulent Mediumship.

SIR,—All who desire the advancement of Spiritualism must feel depressed by the accusations which have recently been brought against some mediums. Long ago I said in 'LIGHT' that the Augean stables should be cleaned out. So long as deception is subsidised by such Spiritualists as will swallow anything, and fraudulent mediumship is financially successful, Spiritualism will be in danger of being disgraced. One might ask—Is human deception to be never-ending? Is there no limit to human treachery? Is life to be blighted for ever by human depravity? Is Nature's human residuum never to be elevated to the dignity of real manhood? Those who assume to be mediums should learn that truthfulness in relation to the divinity within and without is the basic principle upon which moral excellence is established. Those who trade on human gullibility should remember that there is no remission of sin for a moral offence or ill-spent life except remorseful repentance, and perhaps ages of regret in the world to come. Those who have the characteristics of mediumship and intend to exercise them should keep in the path of rectitude, because it is the only one that can lead to happiness—all else to misery and despair. I have always advocated that mediums should be paid for their services, but to prostitute mediumship for emolument and convert a séance into buffoonery is most reprehensible. It is regrettable that any deceitful person could be found who would practise dissimulation in sacred matters for sordid purposes. Dark séances should be abolished, and any medium who refuses to comply with reasonable test conditions is to my mind an impostor. An honest medium has nothing to be afraid of, as any sensible person should know that he cannot command spirits to present phenomena to order. If one séance is unsuccessful, then go on with a series of séances until failure is overcome and mediumship vindicated. It is probable that spirits are willing to manifest when some useful purpose can be accomplished: but it is unreasonable to assume that sensible spirits would go on continually presenting phenomena to injure the medium's physical organisation. If the statements I have read are true with reference to some mediums through whom genuine phenomena have occurred, it would be difficult to convince me that much physical mediumship is not injurious to the physical organisation. It seems that when some mediums hold séances they are prepared to present spurious manifestations if genuine phenomena do not occur, but the evil influence of sitters is not responsible for the medium's preparations beforehand. I believe that, as a rule, spirit communications are governed by the moral and intellectual qualities of the mediums through whom the messages come. All intelligent Spiritualists should vigorously contend against fraud. It is hardly necessary to say that I am not casting reproach upon mediums generally. No one could be engaged in a more honourable occupation or nobler theme than proving the

realities of the spirit world and pulling down the superstructure of materialism; but when it is travestied and degraded one might imagine that human degradation had touched its lowest point. Real mediumship is very valuable, and should be nurtured and cultivated. Some time ago I attended a spiritualistic service, and after a spirit had addressed us one of the audience grumbled because the controlling spirit had not given his name for the purpose of identification. The next spirit who controlled said: 'I am known by the name of "Justice" in the spirit world, but when I was on earth my name was Joseph Hall. I was a Primitive Methodist minister, and preached in this locality.' A person in the audience said: 'I heard you preaching at Brierley Hill.' Mediumship of this kind is pleasing and interesting, but exposures are depressing and disgrace Spiritualism. We should all hope that the time will soon come when mediumistic deception shall die a disgraceful death and be buried with a *hic jacet* written over its grave.

ARIEL.

SOCIETY WORK.

BATTERSEA PARK OPEN-AIR WORK.—The usual workers, assisted by Mr. Penfold, were able to hold a very fair audience, in spite of the demonstration by the secularists near by. We purpose re-commencing the work on Clapham Common, and shall be glad to hear from those willing and able to assist.

HACKNEY SOCIETY OF SPIRITUALISTS, MANOR ROOMS, KENMURE-ROAD, MARE-STREET, N.E.—Last Sunday evening an earnest trance address was delivered through the mediumship of Miss Porter, and good psychometric delineations were given by Miss Findlay. The hall was well filled. Next Sunday, at 11.30 a.m., in Victoria Park. At 7 p.m., in the hall, Mr. Alfred Peters, address and clairvoyance.—O. H.

THE LONDON SPIRITUALISTS' CONFERENCE.—Meetings will be held on Sunday, September 3rd, as follows: At 11 a.m., open-air meeting in Finsbury Park, north of the band-stand, with our Stroud Green friends. A conference will be held at Blanche Hall, 99, Wiesbaden-road, Stoke Newington, to commence at 3 p.m. Tea will be provided by the Stoke Newington friends. At night Mr. A. Peters and others will take part in the meeting.—M. CLEGG, Secretary.

STOKE NEWINGTON SPIRITUAL SOCIETY, BLANCHE HALL, 99, WIESBADEN-ROAD, STOKE NEWINGTON-ROAD (Near Alexandra Theatre).—On Sunday last, Mrs. M. H. Wallis delivered an inspirational address, followed by several successful clairvoyant delineations. The speaker was well received and welcomed by the audience, and her soul-stirring address touched the hearts of many. Sunday next is our floral service, and Mr. J. A. White will give clairvoyance.—W.

GORLESTON.—We were at Gorleston, near Yarmouth, the first week in August, and during that time gave away Mr. Janes' missionary leaflet, 'What is Spiritualism?' along the beach. When we returned some time afterwards we found that only two of the bills were thrown away. A great number of people were reading the bill, and stopped us to ask questions until quite a crowd gathered around us. We found that the feeling of opposition has died away, and the spirit of inquiry has taken its place, which is a hopeful sign of the times.—MARIE AND EDWARD BRENCHLEY.

BATTERSEA SPIRITUALIST CHURCH, HENLEY-STREET, BATTERSEA PARK-ROAD.—We had excellent addresses last Sunday. Mr. Penfold led off with a valuable contribution on 'Liberation,' claiming that 'liberation' without 'reformation' is only work half done. Mr. Alfred Peters followed with an apt quotation from the Bible upon the same subject, and illustrated the truths expounded in a most practical and forceful manner. His clairvoyance afterwards was as good as usual, the messages to strangers, however, being the most convincing feature. H. Boddington presided. Next Sunday, at 7 p.m., Mr. Penfold will speak on 'Spiritual Affinities.' On Tuesday, at 6.30 p.m., Band of Hope. On Thursday, at 8 p.m., a public séance. Saturday, at 8.30 p.m., members' and friends' social evening.—H.B.

CAVENDISH Rooms, 51, MORTIMER-STREET, W.—There was a good attendance at these rooms on Sunday last, when Mr. G. H. Bibbings delivered an address entitled, 'Spiritualism Justified.' The subject was handled in a markedly original style and with consummate ability. The speaker referred to the customary ways of justifying Spiritualism to an opponent, i.e., by dealing with its phenomena and philosophy, but on this occasion he showed how fully Spiritualism can be justified by an appeal to the spiritual nature of man. During the evening Miss Mostyn sang a solo, 'Hosanna in Excelsis' (Ed. St. Quentin), with great musical ability, the kind services of this accomplished singer being highly valued. Next Sunday, at 7 p.m., Mr. J. W. Boulding has kindly consented to deliver an address, the title being, 'Jacob's Ladder from a Spiritualist's Point of View.' Mr. Boulding's ability as a lecturer is now well known, and the Marylebone Association of Spiritualists look forward to a large attendance.—L. H.