

Light:

A Journal devoted to the Highest Interests of Humanity, both Here and Hereafter.

"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!"—Goethe.

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

Contributed by "M.A. (Oxon.)"

The proceedings of the S. P. R., reported at great length in the last number of "LIGHT," were interesting from many points of view, but especially for the weighty and well-considered address of the President. The meeting was a very full one, and the report on thought-reading left nothing to be desired for completeness. The unfortunate note in *The Nineteenth Century* was treated in a dignified manner, more effective than the most elaborate refutation. "We have done all that we can," said the President, "when the critic has nothing left to allege except that the investigator is in the trick." . . . "We must drive the objector into the position of being forced either to admit the phenomena as inexplicable, at least by him, or to accuse the investigators either of lying or cheating or of a blindness or forgetfulness incompatible with any intellectual condition except absolute idiocy. I am glad to say that this result, in my opinion, has been satisfactorily attained in the investigation of thought-reading." "If our investigations," said Professor Balfour Stewart, "are to be disputed on account of untrustworthiness, it is clear *a priori* that the charge of untrustworthiness must be extended so as to embrace Professor Hopkinson and myself, and perhaps also the gentleman who was kind enough to give us the opportunity of seeing the experiments performed; perhaps to include us all—but I do not think that any of us will mind that very much." The latter words were said with a dry humour that provoked a hearty laugh: and though, for their own credit's sake, "the advocates of obstinate incredulity" will (it is to be hoped) abandon an untenable position with all convenient speed, still, if they elect to hold it, ridicule is the best weapon to employ against them. At the meeting they were literally "laughed to scorn."

The many inquiries that have been made from time to time as to the principles and purposes of the S. P. R., have at last (and none too soon) received a full answer in the publication of its prospectus, and in the utterances of its President. That prospectus had not before made its way into the hands of many who were interested in it, and was, indeed, but little known. In quarters which it had reached it had been received, Mr. Sidgwick said, "With entire cordiality [not *credulity*, as erroneously reported], or with guarded neutrality, or with unconstructive contempt." The "unconstructive contempt" probably proceeded from uninstructed ignorance; as the "entire cordiality" did, no doubt, from absolute sympathy with an effort to solve from a fresh stand-point some apparently insoluble problems. The "guarded neutrality" possibly arose from some misapprehension which the President did much to remove in the course of his opening address. There was no doubt a certain kind of feeling among old Spiritualists that their facts were about to be ignored, "thrown aside *en bloc*," and that the whole question of the authenticity of what they regard as perfectly accurate records of fact, and of the reality of the phenomena called Spiritualistic, was to be reopened and attacked *de novo*. This position was authoritatively disavowed. Mr. Sidgwick did not, indeed, attempt to deny that some members "feel that the attempt [to investigate psychic phenomena] can only lead to the proof of most of the alleged phenomena; while some think it probable that most, if not all, will be disproved." It is, perhaps, impossible to gather such a body of men as are included in the various

committees of the S. P. R., without finding considerable divergence of opinion among them. It is certainly desirable that such should be the case, assuming (as the President claimed) that, while the Society is quite unpledged to any theory, its active members, "as individuals, are agreed that any particular investigation should be carried on with a single-minded desire to ascertain the facts."

No reasonable man should object to such an attitude. It is, no doubt, true (though I might, perhaps, interpret the words somewhat differently from the speaker) that "the present state of things is a scandal to the enlightened age in which we live." It is unquestionably a scandal that "the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on, that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them, that so many others should be profoundly interested in having the question determined, and yet that the educated world, as a body, should still be simply in the attitude of incredulity." And if the S. P. R. can successfully attack the problems that perplex the investigation into the more recondite phenomena of psychism, they will have done a service to Spiritualism whatever method they elect to pursue. I do not anticipate much difficulty in such matters as thought-reading, nor probably in collating evidence for such a fact as the newspapers have just recorded at Plymouth, and which is reproduced in another column—an abnormal warning of death. But the real difficulty will be found, unless I am much mistaken, in obtaining first-hand evidence, again and again repeated, of the rarer phenomena of mediumship. These are in their nature fugitive, and their reproduction at a required time is extremely uncertain. Moreover, the Society will probably, and most rightly, insist on rigorous conditions of light and of the position of the medium, which will complicate the task considerably. If, for instance, in attempting to get evidence of materialisation, they require that the medium shall not be secluded, and shall sit in clear light, they will find success very difficult to attain. Nor is a committee of hard-headed men, from whose minds the best intentions will not be able to banish preconceived ideas, a promising body of investigators. Mediums would, it is not improbable, hesitate to run the risk of failure, and fear to face the prolonged discomfort of several fruitless sittings, especially when the negative results would be held to cast doubt, in some degree, on their claims to the possession of available psychic power.

But the Society has further complicated its difficult task by refusing as a general rule to avail itself of the public medium altogether. After making some natural comments on repeated exposures of fraud, which, so far back as twenty years, when Mr. Sidgwick's interest in these phenomena was first aroused, were rife—"nearly every educated Spiritualist that I came across, however firmly convinced, warned me against fraud, and emphasized his warning with impressive anecdotes"—he went on to say: "This leads me to the point which is chiefly characteristic of the method of investigation which our Society will, I hope, in the main use. Though it would be a mistake to lay down a hard and fast rule that we may not avail ourselves of the services of paid performers or paid mediums, still we shall, as much as possible, direct our investigation to phenomena where no ordinary motives to fraud, at any rate I may say no pecuniary motives, can come in." Without presuming to criticise this conclusion, which, I am glad to read, is not "hard and fast," I may venture to say that this refusal to use a fully developed, and (if I may so say) *hardened*, mediumship makes it indefinitely more difficult to get good results. Private mediums are not usually of a fibre sufficiently tough to stand such testing and trying as the committee will and ought to impose: and their development has not reached a point when they can successfully contend against difficulties, even if they are self-sacrificing enough to make the attempt. No doubt the best evidence should be got, if possible; and unimpeached agents should be employed. But, surely, it is

not too much to ask that a committee, such as that of the S.P.R. which will attack these questions, should make arrangements to deal with them without reference to what Dr. Donkin ingeniously calls "the personal factor"?

This same question of fraud, which has been brought so prominently forward of late years, is one, Mr. Sidgwick thinks, of which "no Spiritualist denies the importance." "I think," he says, "that Spiritualists in general—I mean educated, scientific, cultivated ones—were not prepared for the amount of fraud which has recently come to light, nor for the obstinacy with which the mediums against whom fraud has been proved have been afterwards defended, and have in fact been able to go on with what I may, without offence, call their trade, after exposure no less than before." It is undeniable that there is a large body of Spiritualists, especially in America, who have had long, if not exact experience in watching materialisation phenomena especially, who do deny the importance of many alleged exposures of fraud. They are not disposed to accept the charges as proven, and are inclined, frequently, to refer the fraud, when demonstrated to exist, to the action of an unknown agency other than the medium. It is for this reason (among others) that exposures of fraud do not touch the faith of many Spiritualists, nor affect their relations with the incriminated medium. And so long as the present conditions of investigation obtain, so long will it be impossible to say certainly whether, if fraud be proven, the medium is or is not wholly or partially responsible. It is an anomalous state of things which the Society may do much to abolish, by insisting that *all their investigations shall be conducted in clear light, and with a medium who is in full view.*

I am fully aware that such conditions cannot always be exacted by every investigator, but in my opinion the S.P.R. should resolutely refuse to deal with these subjects under any other conditions, and patiently wait until they are forthcoming. Other conditions, however, are entirely conclusive, as the subjoined narrative shews. It has been placed in my hands by Mr. Collingwood, one of the most patient and painstaking, as well as capable, investigators of what he well calls "transcendental anthropology." Mr. Collingwood is an old anthropologist, and has a right to rescue that much-abused term from the perverted use to which his colleagues of the Anthropological Society would confine it. I print the narrative without comment, in the hope that I may be in a position before long to give some personal testimony of a corroborative nature.

"Having recently witnessed the forms that manifest through the medium, Miss Wood, of Newcastle, I send you the evidence to be placed on record. For it is valuable only so far, and no further, as it adds one well-established fact to the mass which is being accumulated on the great and surpassingly difficult question of form manifestations.

"On three occasions I have been present at the rooms of the C.A.S., when Miss Wood sat under tests applied by the sitters with more or less completeness. But I will only give a brief account of the last experiment as typical of all, and of the many that have been made with the same medium through a series of years by Mr. Barkas, Mr. Adshead, and others.

"On Saturday, the 15th inst., fourteen persons were sitting round the door of a room leading to a much smaller room, from which there was no other exit. The doorway was carefully and closely laced across by an endless thread passing through twenty-two eye-headed screws which were firmly fixed; and those screws were in addition, as a test to satisfy, if possible, the scepticism of some persons, made secure against removal by sealing to the wood a bit of fine thread passed through each eye. A curtain was dropped before the door, and after long waiting and much talking with Miss Wood's control 'Pocha,' the little form known by that name came from the cabinet. It was draped in white and was childish in form, in voice, and in manner. Most of us were in turn called to be touched by it, and that gave the opportunity of observing its complete detachment from the cabinet and medium by the space of three or four feet. The apparently tiny hands that touched us, the little arms that embraced us, the small face with the delicate mouth that kissed us, were in keeping with the childish voice and character. Every now and then the form would lie down within a foot of the curtain to recover strength; it was a collapse into a small heap of white drapery of much less volume than the medium and her garments. Another and much larger form then came out, and grew before our sight to a tall figure, the drapery expanding and apparently growing too, and then it decreased before disappearance. At the close of the sitting the thread, the ends of which were tied outside, was taut, and all the screws and fine threads sealing them down were intact.

"Whether the form was Miss Wood transformed or an independent being, did not come within the scope of our inquiry. It

is enough for the present purpose to establish the physical fact; and it is claimed by those who are familiar with this phenomenon to have proved the 'impossible' of the scientists, and the possible alternative of transformation or materialisation, to the earnest and honest inquirer into transcendental anthropology.

"The sitting was held in a light sufficient to enable me to read the time by my watch at a distance of ten feet from the gas-burner.—J. FRED. COLLINGWOOD, F.G.S."

M.A. (OXON.)

MR. W. IRVING BISHOP.

The following is from the pen of the London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. If the writer is correct in his description of Mr. Bishop's most recent experiments, Mr. Bishop has put completely out of court the scientific professors who—*anxious not to believe in the possibility of thought-reading*—attributed his successes to a peculiar aptness in the interpretation of the "indications unconsciously given by the subjects of his experiments." It was not thought-reading, but muscle-reading—so the professors said! Here is what the London correspondent says of Mr. Bishop's present doings:—

"Mr. Bishop's exhibitions of his power differ in an important particular this year from those of last year. He goes out of the room, and is blindfolded, while one of the company hides a pin or some such article. Last year Mr. Bishop on returning to the room took the hand of the person who had hidden the pin or other article, and, begging him to 'keep thinking' of the place where it had been hidden, was, I believe, invariably successful in finding it. This year, however, he finds the object not only blindfolded as last year, but without being in contact with the person who has hidden it. This evidently makes it far more difficult to maintain the explanation given last year by the *sivans*. It was because Mr. Bishop had grasped the hand of the person who had hidden the pin or other article that they believed his power to be explicable as 'derived from indications unconsciously given by the subject of his experiments.' Now, as there is no contact and no means of giving indications either to sight or touch, we seem obliged to have recourse to some other means of explanation."

MR. STUART CUMBERLAND.

Sir Benjamin Phillips, Lord Mayor Ellis, Baron de Worms, Beresford Hope, M.P., and Howard Vincent, recently assembled at the house of the first-named, and submitted themselves to the blandishments of the young gentleman who calls himself Stuart Cumberland, and who has set himself up as a rival to Bishop, the "thought-reader." "Thought-reading" most sensible people know to be all moonshine, but the big pots named seemed to have been pleased with the childish tricks practised by the professor, and to have in no way resented the tax levied on their credulity. I read that "among the most striking of his demonstrations was the extraordinary feat of reading blindfolded the number of a bank-note provided by the Lord Mayor." This reminds me of a little adventure springing out of a recent encounter with Cumberland in the Gaiety bar, which is much affected by the thought-reader. Fred Hughes was bold enough to declare that if he—Stuart Cumberland—could tell the number of a five-pound note he had in his possession that note should be his as a reward for the feat. "Oh!" said Cumberland, "I couldn't do that sort of thing in a public bar." "Very well," answered Fred, who meant sticking to his man, "we will make an appointment for tomorrow, and my offer shall remain good." There was no backing out, and, accordingly, the following afternoon found Fred Hughes, Harry Ulph, William Holland, Cumberland, and a couple of friends, and one or two others assembled in a private room of an establishment not a hundred miles away from Leicester-square. "Here is the note," said Hughes; "I know the number: I'll keep thinking of it,"—that being one of Cumberland's conditions—"you name it, and I'll hand you over the note." Cumberland made several guesses, but never got near. Next Ulph took him on, and he was just as much at sea. Then he pleaded that he wasn't very well, and went away probably convinced, as Fred Hughes put it to a friend of mine, that, although it is good business to practise on simple-minded gullible clergymen and even on Lord Mayors, aldermen, and members of Parliament, it is not wise to try these little games on with members of the Victoria Club, who, although harmless as doves, are yet wise as serpents, and not easily humbugged.—*Referee.*

MISS C. E. WOOD will attend a members' subscription séance at the premises of the Central Association of Spiritualists, 38, Great Russell-street, Bloomsbury, W.C., this (Saturday) evening at 6.45 for 7 p.m. Members desirous of attending, are requested to be punctual. Other séances are contemplated and particulars may be obtained on application to the Resident Secretary.

ESOTERIC VIEWS OF CHURCH DOCTRINE.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—After your judicious reminder that the pages of "LIGHT" were not meant for controversy on subjects foreign to spiritual research, I scrupled to make any comment on Mr. Meyrick's paper in your impression of the 8th inst. ; but further thought leads me to hope that it may not be out of place to draw attention here to the fact that the revelations of *all Spirits* are necessarily liable to different interpretations, according to the mind that receives them. History proves this very strikingly by the false meanings attributed to the oracles of old, when they were consulted as to future events ; their answers were often accurately fulfilled in quite another sense than that in which they were first taken. How often, and how greatly the most reverent interpreters of Spiritual prophecy have been mistaken is even more notorious. But Mr. Meyrick says, and I feel the full force of his objection, "the great mass of the most earnest Christians amongst all sects, except a few Universalists, certainly believe in a God who will send to everlasting torment all who do not accept and act up to the dogmas taught them as those of Christianity." It is undeniable that they do. Let me put my attempt at an answer in the form of a question :—How can a little child be taught in words which at four years old will convey truth to him as correctly as they might when he was fourteen ? Surely they must—if the experiment were ever made—be either misunderstood in early childhood, or seen to be false in adolescence. If a little one trying to walk knocks his head against the table, will any nurse or mother be so silly as to tell him that *he* hurts his head ? No child would believe it if she did—to *him* it is always the injury done by a "naughty table." So they say to the child that the table did it, and bid him not go near lest it should give him a bruise. Later in child-life he sees the mistake. Now human nature, in its earlier stages of development, was as ignorant of the laws of spiritual life as an infant is of the laws of matter, and, knowing nothing of the anguish caused by sin when the spirit awakens from the trance of bodily existence, in order to deter it from sinful courses it was necessary to threaten future punishment, and such kind of punishment as it *could* imagine. As to the factors of that future suffering there was a great misconception, but with regard to its certainty and severity, as a consequence, none. The words of Scripture convey a meaning that is fearfully true, both in Böhme's sense and in that of the Jews before Christ ; but if the Jews, and if uncivilised people since, had been told the modern sense, to them it could not but have been untruth : for the state of the recipient's intellect modifies every revelation.

I repent of the hastiness of my pen when saying that only the most ignorant Christians still believe in a punishing God. It would have been truer to say only those who are most ignorant of the great influx of light upon God's Word granted in later times. I fully acknowledge what Mr. Meyrick remarks upon, that among the religious of every class those are most devoutly and impetuously eager to save souls (as they say) whose strongest argument for conversion is that God will punish the evil doer and sinners who refuse offered grace, by everlasting torments—verily believing that these will be the lot of the greater part of mankind, and not perceiving the horrible dishonour thus cast upon the work of redemption as a failure, and on the love of God as impotent to compass its ends. Though I deplore the results of such teaching on minds that have outgrown a stage of spiritual training when this belief is helpful, it still appears to me almost a providential mode of reaching—by a misunderstood warning—people to whom its real interpretation would be meaningless, and, therefore, quite ineffective. And my contention is that while the interpretation of the doctrine, and resulting conceptions, are inevitably accommodated to the times of our ignorance, the Bible words from which they are deduced remain literally and awfully true ; such, for instance, as "Flee from the wrath to come" (Matthew iii. 7). "Which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10). "By thy wrath are we troubled" (Psalm xc. 7). "In my wrath I smote thee" (Isaiah lx. 10). "Thus will I accomplish my wrath" (Ezekiel xiii. 15), and many other passages. The wrath is truly the wrath of God, but it is the fire of God kindled in the nature of man, or of other derived Spirits acting upon man.

Would it convey truth or error to a mixed multitude of navvies and their feminine associates, to tell them that their spirits were so truly comprised in Divine being that the strong

impulse they felt for swearing and fighting arose from the arrested evolution of the seven Spirits of Eternal Nature ; and that only by quenching the outbreak of that central heat, and resisting its combative impulse, they can win true happiness in any life, here or hereafter ? To add that it was the fire of Divine Nature kindled and ultimated in *them*, which would cause future anguish, and that this anguish, though terminable, might yet last for cycles of centuries, and however short in duration must *feel* everlasting so long as it was endured, would be, I presume, to remove the least remaining check upon sin from any fear of God. The thought would be, "Oh ! if it is only myself I have to suffer from, I can stand that ; and it seems all will come right sooner or later."

Many communicating Spirits have offered just this soporific to conscience in the cruel doctrine of natural and easy progression after death towards all that makes for bliss ; yet those who petition so eagerly for the prayers of the living do not seem to have proved this during centuries of restless misery ; and they speak of no tormentor and no prison. The God within them and the original worm of the soul that *dieth not*, and the central fire that is not quenched, these are their tormentors—these the æonial avengers of past iniquity. But when our uncultured brothers and sisters hear of judgment to come from an angry and avenging Power *à extrâ*, their rough natures, conscious of tyrannous vice, can be made to tremble and to ask "Who shall deliver me from the wrath to come ? What shall I do to be saved ?" And until they have been effectually taught a horror of sin because it separates from any knowledge of the infinite love of God ; and that so far from desiring the death of a sinner, He seeks and sues for the sinner's restoration to life eternal as a father for the recovery of a lost child, it would be teaching falsehood, not truth, to promulgate among the masses Böhme's and Law's expansions of sacred lore. I do not for a moment pretend to think these easy to put within reach of any comprehension ; but what satisfies me that they are a revelation from above, is that they alone can solve the tremendous problem on which the faith of millions goes to wreck : *i. e.*, how can sin and evil co-exist with the love of an Omnipotent God, and in a world where that God is the sole originator of universal life ? The old distinction of esoteric and exoteric doctrine may be indispensable for long years to come, but the all important point in the present day is to obtain, if possible, such valid *esoteric* belief as may give to the religious opinions that we profess the weight and force of entire conviction ; without this no *profession* of faith, however decorous, by educated and thoughtful people, will save the ignorant and thoughtless from losing both the consolations and the moral restraint of what religion they have.

It is not the Word of God in our Bible that can be accused of maintaining an unprogressive faith either in the masses or in the individual leaders of the people. Jesus Christ emphatically announced that His teaching was not final or circumscriptive—that it was only as much as the intelligence of His disciples was prepared for eighteen centuries ago. "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come He will guide you into all truth.*"—(John xvi. 12-13.) We all know how impossible it is for Spirits unbelieved in, and unsought, to thrust new ideas upon the resolute bigotry of minds dulled by the flesh or distracted by worldly occupations ; even He, the Spirit of Truth promised by the Saviour, could not force Church authorities to believe that new revelations were to be made after the time of the Apostles or after the combined efforts of I know not how many Councils of men agreeing first to fix, and then to pronounce complete, the whole of inspired doctrine.

Thank God ! illumination does not reach us *only* by authorised channels ; but the superintendents of our National Church are very slow to perceive this, and with bitter regret I assent when Mr. T. Lake Harris says, "Christendom is dying, not because of the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, but because of its suppression ; where there is a will to the Divine effluence there must be a way." There *is* a way, but it is arduous and unpleasing to us all. Every medium must consent to *self-suppression* before he or she becomes instrumental to super-mundane control ; and among Spirits like will only come to like. How total must be the suppression of all pride, all self-seeking, and all fleshly lusts before the High and Holy One can find a medium among men.

A. J. PENNY.

Beware of confiding in distant prospects of happiness, lest they be suddenly intercepted by the most trivial present vexation. A leaf in the foreground is large enough to conceal forest on the far horizon.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

"LIGHT" may be obtained direct from our Office, and also of E. W. ALLEN, 4, Ave Maria-lane, London, and all Booksellers.

The Editor of "Light" is out of Town, and correspondents are therefore asked to exercise a little patience if their communications have not in every case immediate attention.

Just now news of special interest is not very abundant, and therefore for the next few weeks—that is, until the dull season is over—we shall print fewer pages than usual.

MADAME BLAVATSKY AND THE HIMALAYAN BROTHERS.

The *Harbinger of Light* publishes the following with the assurance that if it were at liberty to give the name of the writer its readers "would have confidence in his statements, on account of his scientific status and known acumen":—

Occult Phenomena.

"While in Bombay, in the early part of the year, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, and of spending a few days under their hospitable roof, at Breach Candy. Of course the conversation often turned on Occult Phenomena, and I heard many strange stories; but I will relate only what came under my own observation.

"One evening the usual daily bundle of letters and papers was brought in. One letter was found to contain some writing with red pencil, in quite a different hand from the body of the letter, and signed with a sort of monogram. This I was told was the writing of a Himalayan brother, who frequently commented on their correspondents' letters in that way. Col. Olcott then remarked that perhaps other letters contained like comments, and he asked me to examine some unopened letters, and then open them myself. I did so, and felt sure the envelopes had not been tampered with. Two on being opened exhibited red writing in the same hand as the first. The envelopes, which I retained, showed the post marks of Meerut, 28th Jan.; Cawnpore, 28th Jan., and Hyderabad, 29th Jan.—places covering ten degrees of latitude—and all these were stamped Bombay, 31st Jan. Next day, at tiffin, while talking on this subject of the letters, it was remarked that if I were to receive any letters while there I might get similar writing in them. I replied that there was no chance of that as nobody would be writing to me. In a little while Madame Blavatsky looked fixedly before her a few seconds, and then said to me, 'You won't believe me, and will call it an illusion; but I saw one of the brothers there—the one who writes the letters.' By-and-by, she added, 'There he is again: not distinct—he speaks to me.' After listening for a little, she said: 'He wishes to know if you would like some communication.' I replied that I would be much gratified. Madame B., rising from the table, added: 'He says it is a very small matter;' and then she asked Col. Olcott and myself (the only persons present) to follow her. Taking my hand, she led me along the verandah, stopping occasionally at different points, until on reaching the room which I had occupied as a bedroom she desired me to look if there was anything in it I had not noticed before, and to close the other openings into it. I did so; it was a large room, with only a few articles of furniture. She then asked Col. Olcott and myself to sit down on two chairs which happened to be near the middle of the room, while she stood before me and held both my hands; immediately a letter fell at my feet from some level above my head. The Colonel, who had a better point of view, said it came from a height of six or seven feet from the ground. Picking it up I found a plain envelope (gummed) and inside there was a sheet of note-paper, bearing a Government stamp of the North-West Provinces and Oudh, and containing writing in pencil exactly like that in the letters the previous evening, and with the same signature. It began: 'No chance of writing to you inside your letters, but I can write direct'—and then a sentence followed personal to myself. The words I had spoken at the table a few minutes before were thus made use of. I have the written testimony of both Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott that they have no knowledge of any such paper as the sheet used having ever been in the house.

"If any of your readers should be inclined to think that all this might have been brought about by pre-arrangement, and by ordinary (although clever) means, I have only to say that the difficulties appear to me to be enormous, if not insuperable, and that several accomplices must have been employed, who thereby would have the power at any time of making an exposure; and finally, to express my absolute conviction that neither Madame Blavatsky nor Col. Olcott would lend themselves to any such deception.—Yours, &c.,

"V. FATOR."

"Naples, March, 1882."

THE DOCTRINE OF EMBODIMENTS.

By Frederick F. Cook, Chicago.

[We give the following communication without committing ourselves to an approval of the opinions expressed by the writer. We shall be glad to receive our readers' views on the subject.]

Though stoutly resisted, the Philosophy of the soul, comprehending pre-existence and embodiments, is making steady progress. Ever and anon it illumines the crest of the inflowing spiritual wave, challenging recognition, and piercing the darkness of external existence with the radiance of internal truth. Yet an intelligent perception of its spiritual, ethical, and social potentialities, even amongst its most advanced and clear-sighted apostles, rarely finds expression. Few, indeed, face this pure light without flinching. So dazzling is it that to most minds it is none at all. As a rule, *a priori* ignorance and prejudice preclude all efforts to seek truth in this direction.

To a few this Divine Revelation comes through the golden mist of reminiscence, and for these the poet Wordsworth has a message, saying:—

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy;
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the Vision Splendid
Is on his way attended.
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common clay."

Intuitive perception such as this, is rare. It belongs to the poet's sphere. It is, indeed, given to few to contemplate existence through an atmosphere so refined. Others perceive it with the eye of faith; a few, perchance, because of an enlightened recognition of the laws of spiritual evolution; but the majority, even of those well disposed towards these teachings, grope along in a dazed sort of way, overwhelmed alike by the individual greatness and littleness in which they find themselves revealed.

To most Spiritualists the doctrine of a plurality of lives is a veritable *bête noir*. It appals them with its possibilities. It is alien to all their modes of thought, and in no wise associated with their mental traditions. In a far-away sense, perchance, it bears the mark of heredity, but not in any direct line. It comes to us out of the past by way of Egypt and Greece. Had it, instead, been taught in Judea, it would to-day be a part of the web and woof of our religious conceptions.

Before the advent of Spiritualism—marking a distinct advance in human thought and perception, as well as a new mode of progress—this overwhelming Truth was revealed only to the Titans in the realm of wisdom, and propagated through various esoteric forms. Ordinarily it is a cast-away pearl. It is instantly mired in superstition or the limitations of a cowardly egoism.

Yet it is the fairest light that ever shone upon earth. It is our divine mother, beseeching us to accept our birth-right—to be consciously, what we are unconsciously, one with eternity. When this celestial truth-bearer is admitted on faith, an angel is, indeed, entertained unawares.

It is well for human kind that into some minds truth flows unconsciously and unresisted—that it is admitted without scientific passport, through the medium of mental hospitality rather than the dictates of unspiritualised reason and intellectual conviction. It was not for the apostles to question—nor was it for them to understand. Imagine Christ addressing an academy of professional scientists! He has studied the history of religion to little purpose, he has even less perception of Divine methods, who insists that man shall be uplifted through the understanding, or not at all.

Even in this day it has been permitted to few to make this sublime philosophy a part of their lives—to employ it as a solvent for all perplexing human riddles. In its integrity it can be perceived only with the eye of spiritual and intellectual courage. You approach it through a haze peopled with a thousand forms of superstition. And when, at last, you stand face to face with it, the coward of time and sense within fairly quakes before the hideous mask that conceals its Beatitudes.

In the proportion that a truth is Divine it is distorted by unspiritualised mental vision. It is only when robbed of all that is essentially God-like—when reduced to the common-place of material existence—that it is credited with the attributes of which it has been spoiled. To him whose vision has been modified to its reception, this light is the whitest, mellowest, most beneficent, that ever illumined the soul of man. Had we not the historic precedent of Socrates condemned for corrupting the youths of Athens, it would appear incredible that these teachings are likewise condemned for their supposed corrupting influences. That which brings one into the very presence of God has been stigmatized as degrading; that which fairly compels purity, so potent are its ennobling influences, has been denounced as immoral; that which lends the wings of angels to the imagination, enabling it to enter the pure ether of abstract existence, has been branded a grovelling superstition.

It is not my intention to enter upon any formal presentation of this philosophy. Neither shall I undertake an elaborate defence. My chief purpose is to consider a few of the objections urged against it, remove somewhat the clouds that ignorance and prejudice have contrived to cast over its fair face, and, in a general way, outline its potentialities.

There is a conservatism among Spiritualists that is truly pitiable. Having taken the all-important plunge into the mysterious sea that separates time from eternity, they dare not trust themselves to swim, but flounder about in sad dismay until the ground of tradition or experience is once more under their feet. Thereafter they cling tenaciously to their material mooring, declaiming vociferously that the whole expanse of eternity is within the range of their vision; that the farther shore is an exact counterpart of the one to which their spiritual cowardice has chained them; and that any who presume to report otherwise are impostors, and dangerous to truth and morals. With the *logic* of their position this class do not concern themselves. Few, indeed, seem aware that there is any logic involved. Having taken the first step they are unable to take another. With the acceptance of Spirit communion there comes to many a sort of spiritual paralysis, and the one living truth in their possession is quickly buried in a common grave with a collection of religious mummies.

Standing on the threshold of our entrance into time, what do we know of our antecedents? Absolutely nothing! The Bible declares our life the breath of God, breathed into the organism at some period anterior to our physical birth. Does this explanation suffice? Science imagines it perceives an evolutionary process of animation, but its best lights freely admit that the chasm between molecules and consciousness is unbridgeable; that their correlation is even unthinkable.

Now what do Spiritualists believe and declare? As a rule something like this: That spirit *per se* is sublimated matter filling a universe of space; that through magnetic conditions, induced by sexual relations, it becomes involved in the meshes of such grosser matter as constitutes the earth and its belongings; that thenceforward the two grow up alike in form and image, the one pervading the other as a consciousness through mortal existence, and, after its birth into spirit relations, the finer fabric remains an everlasting, self-conscious entity. Is this satisfactory? Are time and eternity interchangeable terms? Whence their correlation? Can that which has had a beginning in time be destined for the everlasting? The suggestion is puerile. It is an insult to all philosophic thinking. It is common-place and vulgar to the last degree.

The promulgators of this theory of spirit evolution flatter themselves that it is scientific. It ought to be, for it is certainly nothing besides. In some instances they are pleased to add the element of soul, but this addition is made with caution. In combination with the other postulates it is a most perplexing quantity. It must be denied both entity and identity, or the whole case is immediately conceded to the advocates of pre-existence and embodiments. Hence the soul is described as an uncorrelated principle—a Divine nothing.

We now have spirit matter obedient to earth matter, and an uncorrelated nothing. How out of such relations self-consciousness is evolved, is necessarily relegated to the realm of miracle. Premises like these force the degrading conclusion that *matter* is the creator of life, and this is followed by the paradox that the thing created is superior to its creator. If spirit is the creature of matter—if it owes to matter all its attributes, the crown of which is consciousness—from whence is derived the superiority of spirit over matter so illogically assumed from this point of view? That spirit is superior to matter I firmly main-

tain, but my conclusions are drawn from precisely opposite premises. I completely reverse the method, and contend that but for spirit there would be no material expression at all.

Believers in the philosophy of embodiments maintain that the animating cause in material nature is spirit; that matter is but its obedient servant—merely an expression of its force or activities. Natural law with us means the operation of a conscious intelligence. It is of the first importance that we occupy logical ground with regard to all physical phenomena, and especially with reference to manifestations of life. Spirit evolved to consciousness, entity, and identity, through material processes, subject to time and sense in whose dominion it was called into existence, can have no eternal destiny. If spirit is matter in any sense it must perish—must undergo transformations. Neither scientifically nor philosophically can immortality be guaranteed under any form that is organic, and without organism a material Spirit is unthinkable.

Nearly all enlightened minds have come to regard matter as a mere expression of force. This force we call Spirit, and this in turn is but an expression of Soul. It has been reserved for Spiritualists to give essential existence to matter. Within their distorted comprehension phenomena and noumena are indiscriminately bundled together. Instead of rising to the abstract, they descend to the concrete. Pure thought forms, inorganic creations, art—except as an outward expression—all these highest and purest conceptions have no meaning for them.

But there is also a moral side to this subject, and it is in every way of transcendent importance. Is there not something overwhelming in the thought that any act of ours—in the lowest degree of pollution as potently as otherwise—can result, *volens volens*, in the creation, issue, evolution—call it what you will—of an immortal being? Is there anything in the universe so stupendous as this assumption? Yet most Spiritualists accept this conclusion with a flattering complacency, only modified now and then by the suggestion that God is in some mysterious manner a coadjutor.

There is quite enough to make one pause, when earth-existence is contemplated from the standpoint of the materialist. In truth, so strongly do the responsibilities and obligations of parenthood impress the Secularist that it is from this quarter chiefly that we hear of agitations for regulating the propagation of the race. And yet the Secularist concerns himself with the affairs of mundane life only. It is infinitely to his credit that propagation into this limited existence awakens in him grave solicitude.

Christians, on the other hand, with characteristic disinterestedness, cast the *entire* responsibility on the Almighty. It is He, they maintain, who provides the immortal soul, and, from their point of view, if the conditions under which it is sought to confer immortality on a non-existence do not meet His approval, it is certainly within His power to withhold the animating spark. The Christian's position, whatever else may be said of it, is at any rate strictly logical. We may quarrel with the premises, but the conclusions cannot be disturbed.

Between these extremes the average Spiritualist occupies most unenviable ground. The very best he can do is to make common cause with his materialistic opponent in claiming for parenthood great responsibilities; but beyond sentimentalising upon this topic he dare not advance. If this is all there is of life, the consequences involved in its evolution are obviously quite infinitesimal compared with the Spiritualistic conclusion, which confers immortality. The Secularist may argue with a fair show of plausibility that there can be no sin, *per se*, in preventing that which is almost in the very nature of the case doomed to misery during a limited and hopeless existence on earth, and that a non-existence can never miss an existence that it never had. In a word, you simply prevent nothing from becoming something only to return to nothing.

But how different the consequences from the standpoint of the Spiritualist, if he deny pre-existence and volition to the embodied intelligence. To him the consequences that follow the act that confers human existence are overwhelming. He denies that this is all of life, he also disclaims belief in the direct intervention of God, and thus deliberately assumes the entire responsibility himself, not only for earth-existence, but for eternity.

When an enlightened belief in the possibilities of soul-life shall be more universal, man's conscience will shrink in dismay from the responsibilities implied in the position of present-day Spiritualists with regard to the origin and destiny of immortal beings. It is nothing short of moral stupefaction that enables them to rest in ease at this time, and quite of a piece with that

other moral paradox that permits a man to believe in the utter damnation of nine-tenths of the human race, and yet remain in the enjoyment of a hearty appetite.

In the world of souls there is absolute equality. All have the same origin and the same destiny. All alike make for experience—all alike seek expression through spirit into matter. This is all there is to the phenomenon of external existence. Of responsibilities there are none, except such as naturally arise in connection with the relations temporarily established. In this, as in other things, you must be true to yourself—your highest lights. Within the bosom of the mother there is an instinct that ensures protection to the Spirit that commits itself to her keeping. To a degree, there is similar feeling in the breast of the father. Nevertheless it is a well-established phenomenon that those parents have most offspring who, from a worldly point of view, are least able or qualified to care for them. This seeming perversity in nature should give pause to those who prate in unmeaning terms about cultivating sentiments of parental responsibility. It is undeniable that where this sentiment most exists it is most frequently fated to feed upon itself. Mental and spiritual culture are handmaids to sterility. To the sentimentalist this opens a sorry prospect—to the spiritual philosopher it is a wise adjustment. Mortals born to ease and content remain poor in spirit, for all spiritual wealth is derived from overcoming. Why then should a Spirit desire to embody or express itself where there is dismal prospect of nothing to do—no faults to overcome, no appetites to vanquish? The spiritual crown is not won by shunning vice, but by conquering it. Without misery there can be neither sympathy nor charity. Darkness alone gives value to light. The whole world is a moving antithesis.

Those who believe with me, place the responsibility of existence with the intelligence that exists. We hold that birth into material relations is in no sense an accident, but a deliberate act of volition on the part of a conscious entity seeking expression, and fully aware of its wants.

"No parental responsibility!" you exclaim; "it is a monstrous doctrine." Indeed! What we say is no responsibility for existence. For the rest, I contend that those who believe in pre-existence assume parental obligations with a reverence unknown to those who entertain current beliefs. To us, the babe in its mother's arms is not a thing of yesterday, but a messenger from the consciously pulsating realms of eternity. Not a chance, but a design. Not the fruit of wantonness in any sense, but the result of a spiritual impulsion and a determinating volition. With the tender affections of the mother there mingles a feeling akin to awe—there is less a sense of ownership, and more an expression of those sentiments we entertain for a loved and sacred guest; while the position of paternity is relegated to that of respectable nonentity, where it properly belongs; for what is there more unspeakably supercilious than the inflated pride of a new-fledged father—altogether as if some master-stroke had been accomplished!

A philosophy of existence based on the immortal activities of the soul, retro-active as well as prospective, is the keystone in the arch of religion. Through its potentialities the race will move towards higher results with an ease now incomprehensible. Vast social changes are impending. All the world over, there are forebodings of mighty revolutions. The social machinery now in use fairly groans under the strain to which it is subjected by mere agitations for change. It cannot adapt itself to any new orders. It is essentially founded on the maxim that "Might makes right." Force is everywhere the supreme arbiter. It is this Potentate, with his numerous retinue of obedient servitors—worship of mammon, the blood-ery of the law, invidious social distinctions—that must be dethroned, to make room for an order based on the beneficence and potency of love and charity; and with the advent of these twin rulers the plentiful gifts of nature will be to all of God's children a common heritage. The existing social economy is based altogether on individual ownership. It is the rule of self. For humanity, in the sense of all, there is no consideration, and all expressions in its behalf are regarded with alarm.

Our actions are in great part a reflex of our beliefs. Christian conduct is a marked modification from that exhibited under the Cæsars. The ethical code of the average Roman comprehended but a single virtue, patriotism. Because of the benign influences of Christ's teachings the list of human graces has been greatly augmented, and the scope of our sympathies and the field of our charities infinitely enlarged. In its own time Christianity has done its appointed work. Christians have now

ceased to be reformers. In every land they constitute the mainstay of Conservatism and reaction. Christ, the Communist, is disowned, and in His room we find Judas Iscariot, the holder of the purse-strings, the evangelist of that letter that crucified the Christ spirit.

I am a Spiritualist in the fullest meaning of the term. But I find that one can be something more. In the light of that new sun whose effulgence is spreading over the earth, the limitations of Spiritualism are at times exceedingly painful. Spiritualism is neither religion, philosophy, nor science; it is simply phenomenalism—merely a bridge from Christianity to the new order. Spirit is but an expression—not anything in itself.

Recognition of Spirit is one thing, and is comprehended under the term Spiritualism. Recognition of Soul is quite another thing, but no concrete term has yet been coined to express its universality. Spiritualism can never transcend the Empire of Spirit, and its recognitions can never pass beyond a unitary existence or single embodiment. The other term must be so broad as to include the whole of existence—making any sojourn on earth, in the language of Carlyle, a confluence of two eternities.

In its integrity the soul is a unit. As expression, we are taught, it is dual. It is this duality that constitutes spirit. As spirit, each soul may achieve two simultaneous embodiments, represented by male and female. Each embodiment is an expression for experience, and brings infinite treasures to the soul. When we say the soul is divided for expression in spirit, such division must not be accepted in any literal or special sense. It is said a mother's love is divided amongst her children, but no one infers from this that it is broken in pieces. In the domain of the soul such terms as matter, time, and space have no meaning, except as conditions or categories belonging to an exterior or phenomenal world—a conditioned otherness. Into this world it may project its activities, but it bears no relation to it that may be expressed in terms of matter. The soul of man—and the same may be said of the spirit—is neither in his body nor outside of it. It is without a local habitation. We cannot even locate our thoughts, and soul is something infinitely more subtle. We say our thoughts wander. Is this true, or a mere figure of speech? Is the mind anything besides a register of what thought accomplishes? Is not thought ever on the wing—tireless even in our sleep? Now what is thought? Is it the product of matter? I answer emphatically, *No!* Thought is neither more nor less than spirit, and spirit is neither more nor less than thought—pure and abstract. Hence the spirit is a thought-world. In that sphere you encompass all you are able to understand, to perceive—no more. And these perceptions are never outside of your immediate cognition. In a spacial sense you never go anywhere. Neither, in that sense, does anything or anybody come to you. Lack of knowledge is never due to intervening distance—it is lack of spiritual perception.

If this theory of the soul and its expressions in ever-recurring embodiments is denied, without positing something equally adequate, how is it proposed to fill the immensities of eternity?

Perhaps you will answer: "We are told there is endless progression."

May I inquire what you mean by progress, how you propose to proceed, and what end you have in view? In the first place, is spiritual progress in any way analogous to what we call progress on earth—something associated with mere knowledge of things, such, for instance, as science concerns itself with? Are we not told over and over again that *things* have no existence there—that when you enter the realm of spirit or thought the whole material phantasmagoria passes away like a dismal dream?

"Progress is goodness," will be your probable answer. True, goodness is a positive quality, but it cannot go on eternally feeding upon itself. Its natural food is what we call evil. This affords it opportunity for expression. Goodness without evil, sympathy without suffering, charity without want, are meaningless terms. Antithesis is the animating motive of all spiritual out-workings; it is also the motive for ever and ever recurring embodiments.

"Is it an endless round?" you inquire aghast. It is an endless round. Would you have it otherwise? It is an endless round for spirit, but not for the fragment expressed in the form of man or woman. Although spirit is but the half-expression of soul, its activities are by no means engrossed by animating a single human form. At the same time that it animates your physical organism it has a conscious exist-

ence quite apart from your earth cognition, and this is enriched by such embodiments as have preceded the one you now express. Sooner or later *you* will be added to the number gone before, *you* will take your place in the realm of the spirit's real existence; and when *you* shall have made all the past your own, through recognition of your ubiquity, the spirit—your enlarged Ego—prompted by the sovereign soul, will cast about for another material expression, either in connection with this earth or some other life-sustaining body in the visible or invisible heavens.

Each embodiment illustrates the ubiquity of spirit. At the same time that you appear on earth in the form of a babe you remain a conscious entity in the world of Spirit,—while your soul, so illimitable are its attributes and expressions, is unmoved in its celestial serenity. In neither of these higher or inner realms is there ever eclipse of consciousness or identity. True, from the outer or human consciousness, this inner spirit or soul consciousness, is in large measure veiled. The exclusion of man from his better and greater self is made necessary by the very conditions under which expression is sought. The conscious heir to a fortune puts forth effort with difficulty. Spirit consciousness and earth existence are incompatible relations.

Over the portal of the Delphic Temple, that holiest of Grecian shrines, whence the Pythian oracle gave the message of the Spirit to the sons and daughters of men, was inscribed the simple motto, "Know thyself." In the light of the philosophy of the soul this comprehends the universe. The sum of existence is to make your own acquaintance—first in manifold relations to matter; next, in the vast possibilities of spirit unfoldment; finally, in the infinite domain of the soul.

"The kingdom of Heaven is within you," said Christ. This is true in its most literal as well as most profound and absolute sense.

In a realm where space is not, everywhere and nowhere are synonymous terms. In a realm where time is not, past and future are included in the Now. Consciousness usurps the calendar. Time and space signify to us the difference between ourselves and things. To the Spirit there are no things, hence none of the conditions that make these differences. When Spirit recognises itself all material expressions are excluded. The matter it creates, the phenomena to which it gives *quasi* existence, are never in any sense a part of itself. In a word, matter has no essential existence.

Consciousness is a universal element. It is dependent on neither organism nor function for existence—only for expression through the externals of material relations. It is not divisible. There is consciousness in the blooming rose; in the lark that, singing, greets the morning sun; in the blithesome maiden whose open and sympathetic nature breathes in rhythmic harmony with both. The consciousness in this triune is the same; there is only a difference in the expression. Consciousness is perception. That which is perceived must stand in reciprocal relations to the percipient. Harmony begets unity. In the realm of pure or abstract consciousness all likes are merged. Thus you are ever hastening towards the infinite harmony and unity. As you advance in spirituality there is more and more obliteration of distinctions. Individuality expands into universality. This is a world of doing, the other a world of being. What you do here for others in a spiritual sense you do for yourself. The less you insist on being yourself, the larger will be the field of your sympathies, your intuition and perception, and, in all that constitutes spirit, you will be the greater.

In spirit our various embodiments or lives are merged. None is obliterated, however, and each acquires all possessed by the others. Identity ceases to be a thing of names—it is of the essence of likeness. To employ a material figure, what is embodied here, the present *Ego*, is but an infinitesimal *fragment* of yourself, and *the same fragment is never twice embodied*. Hence, if you care to hug this little self you now represent to yourself, have no fear that you will ever lose it—that it will ever be absorbed by some other earth embodiment. Understand me, *you*, the present human expression, will never return to this earth-bound prison. What will return must be an, as yet, unexpressed element in the spirit. When *you* enter the Spirit-world you will forever consciously remain there—just as the spirit is consciously there now, while, at the same time, it is expressing itself through your material organism. As spirit you enjoy a twofold existence—the infinitely greater part in spirit-life, the infinitesimally smaller in a material embodiment. So far as your present individuality is concerned— I mean separate from your spirit individuality—you will never return to earth. In this restricted sense it will be some other individuality

seeking expression and experience—and this virtually meets the entire class of egoistic objections.

A series of embodiments may be compared to a brotherhood, in which each expression is an entity and has an established identity. But remember that entity and identity in spirit are thought-forms; all objects are subjects. All embodiments preceding yours constitute your heritage, your spiritual possessions; just as fast, but no faster, than you have perception for them. In the last analysis it is but a return to yourself.

This is spirit expression; this is, in brief, the Philosophy of Embodiments. But vast as is the sphere of activity here outlined, it is but the half of spirit experience, and far beyond that again lies the world of soul. I have stated that while it is taught that the soul in its integrity is a unit, as an expression or impulsion into the world of phenomena, it is dual, male and female. Spirit, as a dual expression, follows one line of never-changing male embodiments, and another of never-changing female embodiments. This is the origin of what is known as spiritual affinity between the sexes. As spirit you are but half a soul. Somewhere, either embodied or as spirit, is the other half; and, in any event, achieving a series of experiences that, in the very nature of things, could not fall within the compass of your own existence, because of the sexual distinction. At the end of the long journey of planetary embodiments the divided soul is again united.

I am not the guardian of this Truth. If in undeveloped minds it creates for a time longings and strivings after unrealizable ideals in the conjugal relation, I have no desire to prevent its taking that course. However, when rightly understood, and properly adjusted to the social economy, I am persuaded it will work miracles of domestic harmony. This philosophy is without a suspicion of sentimentality. It unflinchingly brings you face to face with life's realities. While it teaches spiritual affinity, it likewise makes plain that this celestial correspondence does not reach into earth-life to any degree having a practical bearing on the vicissitudes of material existence. In no legitimate way can it be turned to serve any sensual purpose, and is revealed only, I surmise, because it is an essential part of the soul's philosophy, is an intelligent solution of many perplexing problems, and, in pushing forward with other spiritual light into this every-day world, cannot fail to exercise a potent influence in adjusting the balance between the various warring elements in human society.

All potent truths work some mischief in their beginnings. Teachings that come to us with the graces of contemporaneous thought and culture are ever short-lived. Liberty is always preceded by license; freedom by bondage. Far better the license than never any liberty; far better the bonds than never any freedom. It is conservative, time-serving, conventional middle-ground, that to any ardent spirit is most intolerable.

If the brotherhood of the spirit includes kings, warriors, priests, statesmen, beggars, thieves, and murderers, in a single series of embodiments, the sisterhood in like order includes queens, amazons, matrons, ladies of leisure and ladies of pleasure, drudges of toil and the spewings of the brothel. In the great republic of spirit there are no class distinctions. The lowest expression is just as valuable as the highest, and which is highest and which lowest in the light of spirit I will leave you to your own determination, when you shall come face to face with yourselves.

When at last the cycle of embodiments in connection with this solar system is completed, the soul ceases to express itself through spirit, and *spirit ceases to be*. The dual expression is merged in the unit, but what was soul is henceforward known as Angel, and thence, step by step, the way is opened to higher and higher estates.

In conclusion, permit me to say that this incomparable philosophy, this sublime religion, is, in my opinion, preparing to move on the world with a mighty force, and none the less mighty because its sources are invisible. The old order will oppose it desperately, will heap upon it scorn and contumely, but it will none the less prevail. It is the light of eternity.

A PUZZLE.—*To the Editor of "LIGHT."*—SIR,—I cannot help fancying that my letter in your last week's impression must have been printed by the aid of "psychic force" or some other non-intelligent instrumentality. What can your readers make of such a passage as "wholesome and unscientific mode"? That which is unscientific can scarcely be considered "wholesome." Please intimate to your readers that I wrote *wholesale*. You will then enlighten them and convey my meaning.—Yours, &c.,
NEWTON CROSLAND. London, 24th July, 1882.

DARK SEANCES.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—As the expediency of dark seances is just now a much discussed question, perhaps you will allow me a small corner in your valuable journal for the following.

I believe it is now scientifically ascertained that Light is ether in motion, Darkness ether at rest. Can we not therefore from the above, discern a reason for our ethereal friends manifesting with greater ease in a still atmosphere—darkness—than in an agitated atmosphere—light? And such is in exact accordance with their own assurances to me.

I will now merely add, in excuse for thus troubling you, that for years past my private mediumistic experiences, shared with one and sometimes two private friends, in perfect accord with me and each other, have been beyond all that has ever been printed in the public journals; but the dark seances have always far exceeded the light seances in power, and in this I am very glad to be backed up by so experienced a Spiritualist as Mr. S. C. Hall.

M.
July 19th.

SPIRITUALISM IN LONDON & THE PROVINCES.

GOSWELL HALL.

On Sunday morning last the first half-yearly meeting of the C.L.S.E.S. was held for the purpose of receiving reports, and the election of officers and committee. The finance report shewed as follows:—Receipts from all sources, £31 3s. 5d.; expenditure, £27 18s. 1d.; leaving a balance in hand of £3 5s. 4d. This being confirmed by the auditors' report, was unanimously passed. The whole of the officers and committee were re-elected except one of the auditors, in whose place Mr. Cowderoy, senior, was unanimously chosen. Mr. Richard Wortley was by a large majority elected as representative of the Society, to the Council of the C.A.S. The following arrangements were made for Sunday morning work:—First Sunday in month, open for papers and discussions; second Sunday, members' seance; third Sunday, for the development of healing gifts; fourth Sunday, Mr. Wilson, the Comprehensionist. The librarian reported that some thirty volumes were now in the library, all of which have been contributed by A.T.T.P., J. S. Farmer, Esq., Mrs. Burgess, of Cambridge, Mr. Wilson, and others. Various other matters of interest to the Society having been discussed, the first six months' work of this organisation was brought to a close. In the evening another experience meeting was held, which was taken part in by Messrs. Wortley, Swinden, W. Bowman, &c., &c.—
RES-FACTA.

LIVERPOOL.

On Sunday last the Rev. Charles Ware gave two lectures in Concert Hall, Lord Nelson-street, on "Elisha's Servant's Vision," and on "John's Clairvoyance." Next Sunday Dr. William Hitchman, M.R.C.S., will give two lectures on, "Where is the Land of Uprightness?" with special reference to England and Egypt in 1882, and on "Psyche and the Chrysalis, or Man's Immortality a Fact in Nature."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

NEWCASTLE.—Last Sunday night, Mr. Rowe, of North Shields, lectured to the friends at Weir's Court upon "Religion." The attendance was fair, and the lecture good. Mr. John Mould took the chair. On Monday evening the quarterly meeting commenced its sittings, and was adjourned until Wednesday next.

GATESHEAD.—On Sunday evening last, Mr. Robinson, of Newcastle, lectured before a good audience upon "Proofs of Immortality." The lecturer was well received, and the discourse was really an able one. Mr. Robinson is a gentleman who carefully prepares his lectures, and in most cases reads them. I believe that if we had a more careful preparation of subjects by our lecturers our platform would present a stronger and more appreciable front than it does. Mr. W. Pickering occupied the chair.

WEST PELTON.—On Sunday, the 16th of June, the West Pelton Society held their camp meeting, which was one of the most successful ever held at that place. The meetings were addressed by several speakers. Mr. Mahoney, Mr. Dodds, Mr. Grey, Mr. Walker, Mr. Pigford, and Mr. Livingston severally discoursed to large and appreciative audiences. Mr. Henry Burton officiated as chairman of the meetings with judgment and ability.

HETTON-LE-HOLE.—The second camp meeting of the friends belonging to this locality was held on Sunday last. At the morning meeting upwards of 700 persons were present. In the afternoon, through the severity of the weather, the Miners' Hall had to be used, and was crowded to excess, great numbers having to leave the doors, not being able to gain admission. At night, the Miners' Hall, Houghton-le-Spring, was filled with a large and intelligent audience, who seemed to highly appreciate the able efforts of the various speakers, among whom were

Messrs. Dawson, Grey, Dodds, Pickering, Walker, Hall, and Pigford. Everyone who remembered last year, was pleased to see Mr. Henry Burton, of Newcastle, once more in the chair. His able introductory speeches, and judicious arrangement and management of the meetings, called forth the praise of all present. The feeling as expressed in the district is that in spite of all the paltry envy and animosity against him, he is a power in connection with North Country Spiritualism, and is of no little value to the cause he so dearly loves.—NORTHUMBRIA.

WORK OF THE COMING WEEK.

LONDON.

Sunday, July 30.—Goswell Hall. See advertisement.

„ July 30.—Quebec Hall. Lecture, Mr. J. Veitch.

Monday, July 31.—Quebec Hall. Address by Mr. J. Murry.

Tuesday, August 1.—Quebec Hall. Lecture, Mr. Wilson.

Wednesday, Aug. 2.—Central Association of Spiritualists, 38, Great Russell-street. Members' Free Séance at 8 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 4.—Central Association of Spiritualists, 38, Great Russell-street. Members' Subscription Séance with Miss C. E. Wood, at 6.45 for 7 p.m.

PROVINCES.

Public meetings are held every Sunday in Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Leeds, Bradford, Gateshead, Newcastle, Glasgow, Leicester, Nottingham, Belper, &c., &c. See our list of Societies on p. 2.

DR. PEBBLES writes as follows to the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*:—"It is pretty well understood, that just so far as any form of belligerent speculative Spiritualism ignores God—the 'Our Father' of all mortal and immortal intelligences—just so far as it is scoffing, irreligious, and madly anti-Christian, I have not a particle of sympathy with it. The very name is a misnomer. It is not Spiritualism, but rank Materialism, with just enough of the dark-circle physical phenomena sandwiched in, to give it the semblance of the genuine. It is constantly becoming clearer to me that all that is good and pure, all that is heavenly and holy in Christianity is spiritual, and all that is beautiful, uplifting and *divinely ennobling* in Spiritualism is Christian—understanding Christian, of course, in its legitimate, catholic, and spiritual, rather than in any narrow sectarian sense."

A STRANGE INCIDENT.—A Plymouth correspondent says a strange incident is reported in that town. On Tuesday evening of last week a young man, residing at Devonport, called upon the editor of a local paper and begged to be informed if any telegrams had been received giving the names of Englishmen killed during the day in Alexandria. He was informed that no such message had been received. He thereupon mentioned that during the afternoon the mother and wife of a petty officer named Revington, serving in Alexandria, had what they regarded as a token of his death. They were sitting together in their house, talking and working, when they heard, or thought they heard, the voice of the absent son and husband say, "Mother!" three times. With forebodings upon them, the brother was at once despatched to the nearest newspaper office, with the result indicated. On Wednesday, however, the relatives of Mr. Revington received a telegram from the Admiralty to the effect that he was shot in the streets of Alexandria on Tuesday whilst serving on police duty.

WHAT SHALL WE DO IN HEAVEN?—Our departed mathematical friends are busy with figures yet; no place like heaven for figures; space to be surveyed, worlds to be measured. Metaphysical friends there are still studying the human mind; everlasting metaphysics are there—it wouldn't be much of a heaven for me, though, if it was all metaphysics. Explorers are still exploring a continent at a glance, a planetary system in a day. Students are still studying there with all the volumes of the universe spread before them. They stand face to face with the facts of the universe. Historians still study the history of other worlds; astronomers study astronomy, but not through the dull lens of a worldly observatory, overtaking the swiftest comets in their flight. Chemists, lawyers, physicians, are all busy at their old business in heaven. You cannot understand why that patient got well after the doctors had said he must die. Perhaps some departed physician touched him with supernatural health. Those of the departed who were inclined to sociability are now able to hold brighter conversation. What a place heaven is to visit in where your next door neighbour is a king or a prince! If they want to know about the first world just go over and ask Adam. If they want to know about that pillar of salt, ask Lot. If they desire to find out about the parting of the waters, inquire of Moses. If they wish to know the tale of Bethlehem they have only to ask the serenading angels who stood that Christmas night on the balconies of heaven. Ministers visit their old congregations. When I get there I will come and see you all.—*Dr. Talmage.*

MR. J. J. MORSE'S APPOINTMENTS.—GOSWELL HALL: July 30th; CARDIFF: August 6th and 7th; WALSALL: August 13th; PLYMOUTH: August 20th; FALMOUTH: August 27th; CORNWALL district: end of August; GATESHEAD: September 3rd and 4th.—For terms and dates, direct Mr. Morse, at 53, Sigdon-road Dalston, London, E.—[*Advt.*]