

# Light:

*A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research.*

'LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!'—Goethe,

'WHATSOEVER DOTHS MAKE MANIFEST IS LIGHT.'—Paul.

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## NOTES BY THE WAY.

The name of Mr. W. T. Stead has been so much in evidence since the 'Titanic' disaster that we had temporarily overlooked a noteworthy article by Hedley A. Chilvers, in the July number of 'The State' (South Africa). Mr. Chilvers deals with what he calls the inner history of Mr. Stead's 'Spiritism.' After referring to the well-known incident in which the Countess of Warwick received a warning, by automatic writing, through Miss Harper, Mr. Stead's secretary, concerning a motor-car accident, which actually took place, Mr. Chilvers comments on the fact that Julia did not advise Mr. Stead of the coming disaster to the 'Titanic.' And then he says:—

All honour, indeed, to the grand old man of journalism, the Great Heart of the Modern 'Pilgrim's Progress,' that he knew how to die. His death was as fine, as notable, as his life. But splendid as it was, it throws no ray of light on the mystery which he believed he had solved—the mystery of the after life. And it certainly furnishes strong presumptive evidence as to the impossibility of reckoning prophecy as amongst his possessions and attributes, notwithstanding the inexplicable case of the Countess of Warwick.

Really we cannot quite follow the reasoning. Why is it necessary to assume (1) that Julia knew of the impending catastrophe; (2) that, knowing, she wilfully neglected to warn her friend; (3) that the disaster was one from which Mr. Stead should have been preserved by some prohibitive mandate from the unseen world? We see no reason to assume anything of the kind. We can conceive that the great journalist's earthly career was ended in the manner best suited to the necessities of his own welfare and that of the work in which he was engaged. And there is good reason to believe that he *was* 'warned' from more than one quarter of the peril that awaited him. However, it is too large a question to be easily dealt with here. Mr. Chilvers alludes to the famous Gladstone messages and observes that 'they were taken very seriously in high quarters.' He recognises their importance, while doubting their reality as utterances actually dictated by the departed statesman. He sees in them the unconscious action of Mr. Stead's mind influencing the medium.

Mr. Chilvers' position is thus expressed:—

My own difficulty in believing in these matters results from scepticism as to the possibility of separate spirit existence. For if we consider the faculties of speech, sight or hearing, we realise that these can be destroyed by damaging the physical machinery. . . Injure the body badly and it will cease to become effective.

And so forth—the old familiar argument. Well, 'individual spirit existence' is a fact in this world, and

with the acceptance of St. Paul's teaching concerning a spiritual body, together with the multitude of modern evidences which go to substantiate it, it should not be difficult to conceive of individual spirit existence in a future state. Injury to the 'physical machinery' necessarily affects the expression of vital activity in the physical world. But it needs no logical processes to enforce the acceptance of a commonplace fact of that kind. None of us ever doubted it. Translated to the next realm of existence the individual consciousness is no longer able to manifest itself *directly* in the physical world. But in certain conditions it can more or less imperfectly reflect its activities through the medium of peculiarly-constituted organisms in this life. That is a world-old fact, and its reality has been demonstrated thousands of times.

We have received a copy of 'Thaumát Oahspe,' a pamphlet, by Mr. J. Nelson Jones, of Ararat, Victoria, Australia, containing a series of articles (some of them reprinted from the Melbourne 'Harbinger of Light') descriptive of the teachings of 'Oahspe,' the remarkable volume of revelations given by 'automatic writing' through the instrumentality of Mr. John B. Newbrough, of New York. In his paper on 'The Progress and Purpose of Spiritualism,' read at the International Congress at Liverpool, and published in our issue of 21st ult., Dr. J. M. Peebles gave us his opinion of 'Oahspe' in a few pungent sentences. 'Oahspe,' he remarked, 'has some good things in its lumbering pages—and so has the Bible of the Mormons.' From which one gathers that the 'new Bible' is like many other things—Wordsworth's poetry and the celebrated egg of the timid curate included—that is to say, 'parts of it are very good.'

Our immediate concern, however, is with the pamphlet designed to set forth the character of the revelation. Well, we find much that disposes us to regard 'Oahspe' as containing some indisputable truths and some salutary teaching, expressed in a form that is likely to detract from their general acceptance. In a word, the ancient theological trail is over it all. We are told what 'God, Son of Jehovih' said concerning the Council of Nice and other matters. And, frankly, we do not find it inspiring. We prefer teachings and revelations of all kinds in a form suited to an age of reasonable and scientific inquiry. Appeals to antiquity and deliverances of a 'Thus saith the Lord' kind are out of date. They have but a limited interest, however much of truth and fact they may contain. It is a busy age, and the number of those students who will probe for treasures in writings of this kind is not large. Modern journalism is not all that could be desired, but it at least aspires to set out what it has to say on clear, rational lines, shunning obscure and ungainly forms of speech. We are emboldened to write thus frankly by reason of some remarks in the preface to the pamphlet:—

Every man must judge for himself and apart from priestly authority.

Mr. Richard Bagot has contrived to infuse a decidedly 'occult' atmosphere into his latest novel, 'Darneley Place' (Methuen, 6s.). It is the story of a vendetta, which has its rise in the elopement of an Englishman with a young Sicilian lady whose family, smarting under the injury, vowed vengeance upon the author of the mischief, and set about to obtain it. To baffle their designs the Englishman changed his name and eventually retired from the world and lived a hermit life. But the 'Negrini vengeance' was only put off for the time. The influences of the occult world come into play. There is a mysterious clock which is supposed to be charged with the thought energy of its maker, and which plays a part in the final tragedy. There is a clairvoyante too—a woman so poor that 'she is obliged to use her gift of clairvoyance as a means of gaining a living.' (That feature of the book gives it a quite topical flavour just now!)

Mr. Bagot is a past-master in the art of depicting Italian life and character, and most of the persons in the story are Italians. There is a Cardinal Lelli, for example, who discourses with true Southern eloquence and insight concerning the occult circumstances of the tragedy. In his conversation with the Professor (another character) on the subject of the mysterious clock, he coincides with him in the theory of its psychic influence:—

You are certainly logical. To contradict you I should have to assume the attitude of a materialist. . . The fact remains that Darneley feared the fate with which the maker of that clock threatened any possessor who did not carry out his desire; that he did carry out that desire year after year with extraordinary punctuality; and that when, presumably because his mind was entirely occupied by other things, he omitted to wind the thing up, that fate overtook him within the time mentioned by its maker. To most people the whole thing would be a coincidence; to others it would assume a different aspect. Between ourselves, I may tell you that I am one of the others.

A most readable story, told with grace and distinction, although the dialogue suffers a little from want of compression.

The September number of the 'Theosophist' contains the second part of an article by 'Alba' on 'Education and Spiritual Culture,' in the course of which the writer, in insisting on the necessity for developing 'the perception of the beautiful and the lofty, the faculty of conceiving beauty under all its forms,' calls attention in this connection to the endeavours of the talented Russian violinist, Mrs. Ounkowsky, 'who has created a wonderful method of "colour-sound-number," and who has put it already into practice in schools with brilliant success.' 'Alba' says:—

During Mrs. Ounkowsky's lessons, sounds, colours and numbers verily *live*. The children are shown landscapes, flowers, birds and butterflies. They find out the musical notes corresponding to the colours, and translate the pictures into music. Then they learn songs, composed on those basic notes, and praise in music the beauty of woodland, sunset, sea-gull, admiring at the same time the pictures of the objects they praise in song. One must hear those extraordinary musical pictures, in order to comprehend to the full their sweet loveliness and the significance they have for the spiritual growth of a young soul.

#### 'LIGHT': 'TRIAL' SUBSCRIPTION.

As an inducement to new and casual readers to become subscribers, we will supply 'LIGHT' for thirteen weeks, *post free*, for 2s., as a 'trial' subscription, feeling assured that at the termination of that period they will find that they 'cannot do without it,' and will then subscribe at the usual rates. May we at the same time suggest to those of our regular readers who have friends to whom they would like to introduce the paper, that they should avail themselves of this offer, and forward to us the names and addresses of such friends, upon receipt of which, together with the requisite postal order, we shall be pleased to send 'LIGHT' to them by post, as stated above?

#### LONDON SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE.

ON THURSDAY NEXT, OCTOBER 17TH, AT 7 P.M.,

#### A CONVERSAZIONE

of the Members, Associates and Friends of the London Spiritualist Alliance will be held

IN THE SALON OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS,  
SUFFOLK STREET, PALL MALL EAST, S.W.

Music, Social Intercourse, and Refreshments during the Evening.

MR. JAMES ROBERTSON, of Glasgow, will deliver a short address on

'The Gift of Tongues: A Chapter in Spiritual History.'

MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES may have tickets for *themselves and their friends* on payment of the nominal charge of *one shilling* if taken before October 14th: OTHER VISITORS *two shillings*.

To facilitate the arrangements it is respectfully requested that Members and Associates will *make early application for tickets*, accompanied by remittances, to Mr. E. W. Wallis, Hon. Secretary, 110, St. Martin's-lane, W.C.

Meetings will also be held in the SALON OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS, Suffolk-street, Pall Mall East, S.W. (near the National Gallery), on the following Thursday evenings:—

Oct. 31—Mrs. Mary Seaton, on 'The Basis of Unity in New Schools of Thought, including Spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Mental and Spiritual Healing, New Thought, Bahaism, &c.'

Nov. 14—Rev. Arthur Chambers, on 'Spiritualism as it Affects us in our Outlook upon Human Life and Experience.'

Nov. 28—Mr. E. Wake Cook, on 'The Great Problems in the Light of Spiritualism.'

Dec. 12—Mr. H. Biden Steele, on 'Psychic Investigation from Several Aspects,' with some illustrations.

*The arrangements for next year will be announced shortly.*

#### MEETINGS AT 110, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.

##### FOR THE STUDY OF PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.

CLAIRVOYANCE.—On Tuesday *next*, October 15th, Mrs. Cannock will give clairvoyant descriptions at 3 p.m., and no one will be admitted after that hour. Fee, 1s. each to Associates; Members *free*; for friends introduced by them, 2s. each.

PSYCHICAL SELF-CULTURE.—*No meeting* on the 17th, because of the Conversazione.

FRIENDLY INTERCOURSE.—Members and Associates are invited to attend the rooms at 110, St. Martin's-lane, on Friday afternoons, from 3 to 4, and to introduce friends interested in Spiritualism, for informal conversation, the exchange of experiences, and mutual helpfulness.

TALKS WITH A SPIRIT CONTROL.—On Friday *next*, October 18th, at 4 p.m., Mrs. M. H. Wallis, under spirit control, will reply to questions from the audience relating to life here and on 'the other side,' mediumship, and the phenomena and philosophy of Spiritualism generally. Admission 1s.; Members and Associates *free*. MEMBERS have the privilege of introducing *one* friend to this meeting without payment. Visitors should be prepared with written inquiries of *general interest* to submit to the control. Students and inquirers alike will find these meetings especially useful in helping them to solve perplexing problems and to realise the actuality of spirit personality.

SPIRIT HEALING.—Daily, except Thursdays and Saturdays, Mr. Percy R. Street, the healing medium, will attend between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., for diagnosis by a spirit control, magnetic healing, and delineations from the personal aura. For full particulars see the advertisement supplement.

ON THURSDAY NEXT the Alliance will commence its lecture season with a Conversazione and the Members and Associates anticipate a most enjoyable evening. These meetings are invariably well attended, and this year we expect that there will be a larger gathering than usual to welcome our good friend, Mr. James Robertson, of Glasgow, who will deliver a short address on 'The Gift of Tongues: A Chapter in Spiritual History.' The tickets for this meeting, which are one shilling each to Members and Associates and their friends, will be sent on application to the Hon. Secretary. See notice above.

### A JUST AND RIGHTEOUS GOD.

When a religious thinker emerges from the lower stages of thought and feeling, where worship is little better than a cringing before a tremendous Power, and when the sunshine of Divine love begins to beam upon him, there comes a perfect fascination in the effort to 'justify the ways of God to man.' He longs to vindicate His goodness, and to show how, above all lower clouds, the heavenly purpose broods. That is a most beautiful and instructive thing, and goes far towards showing how true it is that, hidden in man's very nature, there is the germ of the heavenly instinct which sooner or later will move him to grow towards God.

But if this is so in the case of those who, emerging from the lower stages of spiritual unfolding, are just beginning to know the living and loving God, how much truer is it of those who have attained the higher reaches of communion with Him! It is perfectly natural for these to penetrate beyond all baser grades of feeling, to the calm and happy trust of the childlike spirit.

And yet a curious difficulty awaits us here. The higher our spiritual attainments, and the purer our religious ideas and emotions become, the more distinctly we see and the more keenly we feel the distressing things in life. The very advance that makes the soul sensitive to the love of God makes it also sensitive to the sorrows of Man. And yet the supreme necessity is there—to cling, in spite of all, to the splendid faith in a just and righteous God.

This becomes possible because of a third fact—the ability to walk by faith, that is, to hold by great ideas and confidences, in spite of incidents which appear to make against them. This is a profound compensating power: and, but for it, the religious thinker, aghast at the miseries of earth, would often be unable to hold his own: but, just in proportion as the sensitiveness grows, the power to trust and hold on grows too, until at last 'perfect love casts out fear.' When such a triumph of faith is achieved, the devout spirit is able to cling to an ideal, and to regard all contradictions to it as poor transient things, destined to pass away as clouds pass before the heavenly blue.

And yet it is good, at times, to add knowledge to faith, and to give reasons for the hope that is in us, that we are trusting in a just and righteous God. Two of these reasons we select for mention, because they are seldom, if ever, mentioned in this connection. The first is, that all God's laws are steadfast and never defraud, are never partial and never fail, in the sense that every effect is the exact consequence of an adequate cause. Until lately it was an unusual thing to appeal primarily to natural laws for direct proofs of the goodness and justice of God. It used to be far more common, and it was considered far more religious, to appeal to something more like supernatural intervention. But we are finding the surer ground, and the end will be the basing of trust in God upon the wonderfully beautiful phenomena of Nature, and upon the very steadfastness of the laws which at one time seemed harsh and cruel.

Injustice is partial, fickle, selfish, often scornful, and apt to treat with contempt the weak and poor. But majestic and sure are the wonderful laws of God. They wait at the beck and call of everyone. Even the little child, taking its poor weed to plant, will not be scornfully passed by, for Nature will grow even unbaptised weeds if we ask her. No prayer is needed and no set hour; for if, when night has settled over the sleeping town, some poor man should seize the hour to drop the seed into the earth, Nature, which never sleeps, and all her wonderful

laws, which never rest, would take the poor man's part and at once begin their mysterious processes, to give, in due season, the silent sower his return; for you cannot take Nature by surprise.

It is true that Nature's laws often work us harm, but they never do so by caprice. The effect may be deplorable, but it is the precise product of a cause, and in this very thing we may see the beneficence and justice of Him who governs all with equal and inexorable hand, to see that the link is never broken that binds together effect and cause.

The other indication of the same truth is found in another fact of our nature and condition, leading to the same discovery of the perfect justice and goodness of God. It is this: that in evolving Man, He is creating him with a will stronger than his power. Man with a surplus of power over will is, or would be, a monster of action, stumbling on without intention, spending his life in huge floundering of activity that thought and will could never regulate, since the weaker will could not control the stronger force of power to do, which would outrun judgment and intention.

On the other hand, with the power to will and think greater than the power to merely act, it follows that there is a surplus of choosing power, a surplus which outruns mere blind activity and gives scope to thought and will. We often sigh over our limited power of action, over the slow and inadequate following of our doing upon our willing. But, after all, is this not the very thing that protects and saves us? for now we can send our noblest part on before, like a far-sighted and faithful courier, to view the land and plan the deed. We often moan that 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak'; but how good it is that this is so!—how dangerous it would be if it were the spirit that was weak while the flesh was strong!

Who can doubt that if we gave the spiritual powers in us the right to rule, this sin-smitten earth might become a Paradise? But is it not to this that all things tend? is it not to this that the creative process which we call 'Evolution' leads? There is nothing actually new in this conclusion, because, one way and another, it has been the dream of all the ages and of all holy souls, and it lands us on the sunny side of the faith that there is in very deed a just and righteous God.

### A STRANGE PLANT.

A recent number of 'The Times' South American Supplement contained a remarkable story of the discovery in the Caquetá district of Colombia by a certain Dr. Rafael Zerda Bayon (who is vouched for by a special correspondent of the paper as a 'typical scientific man') of a plant which is stated not only to be a specific for beri-beri, but also to have a curious effect in placing the patient in a condition where he is open to receive a certain amount of telepathic communication. Dr. Bayon said:—

I was induced after considerable hesitation on my part by Colonel Custodio Morales, commandant of the military detachment in the Intendencia of the Caquetá, who wished to try the effects of yagé upon himself in my hut on the bank of the river Hacha, to give him fifteen drops of a preparation of yagé which at the time I believed to be its active principle. He took the tincture at night in a jar of water, and in the morning, at reveille, he came to me with the news of the death of his father, who lived in Ibagué, and of the illness of his little sister, whom he loved very dearly. All this he declared that he had seen during the night; no one had arrived who could have communicated such news to him, and the nearest post or telegraph office is at least fifteen days' journey away. About a month after this strange vision, a courier happened to arrive with letters which announced to him the death of his father and the recovery of his sister from a serious illness.

To CORRESPONDENTS.—Several communications intended for this issue of 'LIGHT' are unavoidably held over till next week.

## NOTES FROM ABROAD.

'Psychische Studien' for August contains a thoughtful article in defence of the 'dark cabinet.' The writer refers to the objections raised to it by many sceptics, but is of opinion that unprejudiced and truth-seeking investigators of psychic phenomena will not be in the least influenced by the fact that mediums usually prefer to work in the dark. He finds it quite natural, seeing that light as well as darkness exercises a great influence on the physical world in general, and on man individually. 'Light,' he says, 'is, of course, the primary cause of every existence, yet man seeks also light in darkness. There are certain abnormal cases where the desire for light produces light emanating from the inner self. In the night-time our best and noblest thoughts are produced. The prophet Mahomet received his inspirations in a dark cavern, and Christ himself passed whole nights in silent prayer.'

M. G. Camus, writing in 'Le Monde Psychique' on 'Experiences in the Mental Transmission of Letters,' says that although the greater number of our present-day scientists still deny the possibility of mental communication, those interested in psychic study, on the contrary, recognise it as an established fact. In support of his opinion he quotes both Camille Flammarion and Léon Denis. Camille Flammarion wrote some time ago: 'The action of one being on another at a distance is a scientific fact as certain as is the existence of Paris, or Napoleon, or oxygen, or Sirius.' Léon Denis says: 'Two souls united together by the undulations of the same psychic rhythm can feel and vibrate in unison.'

The above-mentioned review, which some time ago announced the intention of forming a 'Julia Bureau' at Paris, now informs its readers that the practical work of the Bureau was started on August 1st, with M. Lefranc as director. The latter makes the following important statement: 'Our "Julia Bureau" has been opened not only with the idea of establishing communion between the living and the discarnate, but also to give experimental proofs of the survival after death by identifying, according to Dr. Bertillon's system, the materialised forms of the departed. We therefore call the attention of our members to the fact that we are now prepared to accept their finger imprints—of the two hands—for future experiments. When the proper time comes—*viz.*, after their transition—we hope to prove through these imprints their identity, should they at any time be able to materialise.'

'Le Messenger' for July and August contains an abridged translation of the address on 'The Highways and Byeways of Spiritualism,' which Mr. Percy R. Street delivered at the May Meetings of the London Union of Spiritualists. The remaining pages of the journal are devoted to a continuance of Allan Kardec's biography. While reading it, we are reminded of Kardec's opinion on the foundation of Spiritualistic circles and societies. He says: 'The nature of Spiritualistic work requires perfect calm and self-possession. If members of a circle desire conditions of order, tranquillity and stability it is absolutely necessary that fraternal union should be maintained. . . . Any society not founded on the fundamental basis of charity will have no vitality. . . . True Spiritualism can be recognised by its charity in thought, word and action, and anyone nourishing feelings of animosity or jealousy deceives himself if he thinks that he understands or practises Spiritualism. . . . Rivalry and pride will kill Spiritualistic circles as surely as they destroy nations and society in general.'

In 'L'Echo du Merveilleux,' M. Albert du Pouvoirville publishes some curious details of Chinese occult practices. The Chinese, he contends, possess a far deeper knowledge of the mysterious forces of Nature than we Europeans, and he quotes several cases to verify his assertion.

A native, prepared by the usual macerations, is led into an open field where a large crowd is assembled. He is bound and blindfolded; his mouth, ears and nose are closed up by inserting a gum-like preparation of opium, and after various other strange proceedings he is buried in a previously prepared grave, about three yards deep. When the grave is filled in, and the ground again level, it is sown with rice. Then amidst deep silence the spectators depart, but, if desired, some watchers remain night and day. After the lapse of three months, when the rice is fully grown, the same crowd again gathers in the field, the grave, on being declared intact, is opened, and the apparent corpse taken out. Artificial respiration is resorted to, the rigidity of the body relaxes, and within an hour's time the man slowly raises himself, none the worse for his ordeal. Chinese initiates declare that, under certain precautions, the 'subject' could remain not only three months, but three years in his voluntary tomb.

Again, some of the 'Taosse,' as the mediums are called in China, can, by making certain magnetic or magic passes divert a

stream from its course and make it run in the opposite direction. This phenomenon lasts a few moments whilst the 'Taosse' remains in an almost exhausted state.

F. D.

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 THE VOICES, 1912.

By VICE-ADMIRAL W. USBORNE MOORE.

(Continued from page 473.)

The accompanying narrative has been sent to me by a mining engineer who manages some large quarries in the North of England. On several occasions he travelled between five and six hundred miles in twenty-four hours in order to be present at the séances. I have good reasons for saying that he is an acute observer. At his first séance he was an entire stranger to Mrs. Wriedt and the inmates of the house.

For many years I have been interested in reading all the literature I have come across on psychic phenomena, and naturally I had a strong desire to witness some manifestation of spirit return, so that when Admiral Moore offered me the opportunity of attending Mrs. Wriedt's séances at 'Julia's Bureau,' Cambridge House, I readily accepted. I had never been to a séance of any kind before, so entered upon my experiences with my wits about me as one entering an unexplored country.

As I am a mining engineer by profession, my hearing has been trained to locate sounds in perfect darkness, and I feel, perhaps, more at home in it than do those who are unacquainted with the absolute darkness of a coal mine.

All my notes of the sittings were made immediately after leaving, usually in the train riding home, a five-hours' journey by express. Some of the sittings are reported in detail by a stenographer whose services I was able to requisition, and who had the faculty of being able to write shorthand in the dark. The following may be taken as a correct record of what took place in my presence, but condensed and contracted, as there was much spoken of too private a nature to be made public, not only in my own case but in the case of other members of the circles.

May 25th, 1912. After being received along with other visitors by Mrs. Wriedt, I was asked to ascend to a room on the first floor. Although it was only 7 p.m. and still daylight, this room was lighted by electric light, the windows being heavily curtained to exclude any ray of daylight. The room itself was rectangular and, I should judge, about twenty feet long by twelve feet wide. The walls, where not covered with book-cases, were hung with pictures, for the most part photographs or portraits of people, except at one end, at which stood a cabinet, *i.e.*, a black piece of furniture about three feet square and six feet high, standing against the wall, with two curtains hung on the open front. I looked inside this but saw nothing. Next to it in the corner stood a mechanical musical instrument, which was playing rather sweetly at the time. In front of this musical instrument stood a small square table, on which were placed vases of flowers. Ranged in a semi-circle facing the cabinet were chairs for the sitters, and behind the chairs again was another larger oval table carrying bowls of roses and other flowers. Mrs. Wriedt suggested where we should sit. There were eleven of us on this occasion, including Mrs. Wriedt, who placed in the centre of the circle on the floor an aluminium trumpet standing on its bigger end. I examined this and found it to be a simple tapered tube made in three pieces to telescope; it was damp inside, and Mrs. Wriedt explained that she had been drenching it with water. The lights were extinguished, so we found ourselves sitting in complete darkness, the scent of the roses being very noticeable. The séance was opened by all repeating the Lord's Prayer and then singing a hymn, 'Lead, Kindly Light.' Now I copy from my notes. We sat still for probably five minutes when a lady near the small flower-table said that she was being touched on the face. Immediately afterwards the gentleman sitting next her said something had dropped on his foot, and feeling, said it was a flower; a moment after I myself felt something with a fragrant scent touching my forehead very delicately; it was cool, as though dew was on it; I put my hand up to feel and found the stalk of a rose placed against my fingers and naturally took hold. I noticed that it showed no disposition to fall down whilst I was taking hold nor did I feel anything supporting it. Mrs. Wriedt was speaking to someone at the time some distance removed from me. After that, flowers were scattered over the sitters. Presently I heard a voice uttering a sort of prayer which ended with 'God bless you,' repeated two or three times. Mrs. Harper, who was present, said it was Cardinal Newman. Following that, several voices spoke through the trumpet to various sitters but they were not recognised except in two cases, one being by a lady

(the relationship was not disclosed, but terms of endearment passed between them, the voice being very clear), and in the other a voice spoke to a lady so distinctly that I heard every word, although the lady addressed did not hear so well. When this voice finished the trumpet fell to the floor, and some of us were about to feel for it and put it up again, but Mrs. Wriedt told us to leave it alone; the spirits would find it. 'John King' then spoke, greeting the company in a loud voice, and departed. I then heard a voice close to me, but thinking it was meant for my neighbour, was surprised to hear her told that the voice was not speaking to her, but to Mr. M— E— (that is myself). My name was given clearly and distinctly, but I quite failed to identify the name given by the voice. He described himself as a friend of the family, and, seeming to be annoyed at my stupidity, ceased speaking. I now noticed ovals of light floating about above the cabinet, but could not see any detail, but those who had better psychic vision than myself described them as men's faces. Suddenly there appeared a very bright oval light above the cabinet, and I distinctly saw the face of Mr. Stead, who seemed to bow to the company and then disappear. Almost immediately after a strong voice asked, 'Did you see me?' One or two ladies immediately replied, 'Yes, Mr. Stead.' The voice replied, 'I am not speaking to the ladies, but to the gentlemen,' then, addressing me by name he said, 'How do you do? I am pleased to see you here.' (I knew Mr. Stead when he lived in the North). Voices continued to speak afterwards but with no great success, and Mrs. Wriedt decided to close the séance, which was done by singing a closing hymn. When the lights were turned up I saw that a bowl which had contained flowers on the small table was empty, and flowers were scattered on the floor. This was about 8.30 p.m. I have gone into detail and particulars of the séance-room and procedure as it was my first experience, but will simply give practical results of the further sittings, as the methods of conducting them were much the same.

May 27th. There were thirteen at this séance, eight gentlemen and five ladies. 7. p.m. For ten or fifteen minutes there was no manifestation. Then something was heard to fall on the floor in the circle; shortly after I heard a swishing sort of sound and felt something laid on my shoulder. I took hold of it and found it to be a long stalked rose. I laid it on my lap, but as it began to move away, kept it in my hand. Nothing more happened and Mrs. Wriedt closed the sitting and expressed disappointment at the failure. When the lights were turned up, a book, a quarto volume on the British army, was found on the floor, which Mrs. Harper returned to its place in a bookshelf at the back part of the room. A bowl of flowers was also found on the floor in the centre of the circle.

May 31st. Sitting commenced about 7 p.m. with seven ladies and five gentlemen. About 8 p.m. touched on left knee with trumpet. Voice: 'E—' (myself). 'Yes, who are you?' Voice: 'I am your uncle, your father's brother.' 'Yes?' Voice: 'I was with your father this morning.' Question: 'Is it Willie?' Voice: 'I am known as William.' Question: 'Were you with me to-day?' Voice: 'I am with you always.' Question: 'Is my brother with you?' Voice: 'Yes, he is here now; he asked me to speak to you first, to see how the thing worked.' Question: 'Ask him to speak.' (Interval: others speaking.) Voice: 'E—.' Question: 'Yes, who is it?' Voice: 'Brother.' Question: 'My brother J—?' Voice: 'Yes, are you deaf?' 'No, I hear you, and am listening.' Voice: 'I have been seeing mother to-day.' Question: 'How did you find her?' Voice: 'Better than she was; she has not been at all well this winter, but is better now that the weather is warmer.' (Correct.) Then followed a long conversation over the manner of his death, which occurred under tragic circumstances in a foreign country during a political upheaval, but as the names of people still living were mentioned I cannot, for obvious reasons, make public what was said, but I may say that what he told me threw a strong light on the mystery of his death, and made clear what had hitherto been a strange problem. At the close of the conversation I asked him, 'Tell me, do you know what I am touching now?' Voice: 'Yes, it is the ring I gave you. Keep it and wear it always.' (Correct; I made no sign of taking hold of the ring, as it had been between my finger and thumb of the other hand all the time). I had sufficient proof at this sitting to convince me of the genuineness of the communications.

June 18th, 2 p.m. Private sitting. Soon after the lights had been lowered I saw discs of red light about the size of a half-crown floating about quite near to me. Then my brother began to speak, and from him I learned the whole story of the treacherous circumstances surrounding his death; he gave names of people and places only known to myself. In describing one room in a certain house in this distant and turbulent country, he used a term which gave a clear reason, for me, of its peculiarities which had puzzled me when I visited the place some short time after. Towards the close of the sitting he warned

me to be particularly careful in the use of my motor car at a certain period, detailing the class of trouble which would arise. Curiously enough, I had the trouble at the time predicted, due to the illness of my regular man. However, I was alert owing to the warning, and discovered the fault before anything very serious happened. My uncle then spoke and said that he had been with me the previous day in my office, describing correctly the actual work I had been engaged in. When we were about to close I felt something touch me on the foot, and, on remarking it to the psychic, 'John King' spoke, saying that it was a small dog I used to have, come to see me. He described it well, and gave a word sounding very like its name. I had a dog similar to the one described some years ago which was poisoned by some stranger and died in my hands.

June 22nd, 4 p.m. Private sitting. My brother came again and spoke with me on family matters which cannot be set down here, and two other close relatives, who had passed out of this life, held conversations with me, and thereby clearly demonstrated to me the truth of spirit return. 'John King' came and spoke to me in his strong voice, encouraging me to go on with my investigations.

At a sitting the same night, at 7 p.m., where there were eleven present in all, including Mrs. Wriedt and the stenographer, no one spoke to me except one, 'Blossom' (a child's voice), who seemed to delight in discovering hidden trinkets or private mementoes worn by the sitters and describing them. In my case she correctly told me the number of gold coins in my pocket, the number being quite unknown to me at the time. She also told me how I proposed to spend it, and what I was going to do the next morning. (All correct.) A great deal of conversation took place between 'voices' and the other sitters, but nothing which I can repeat.

June 24th, 7 p.m. This was an excellent séance, lasting two hours, Admiral Moore being present. 'Dr. Sharp' immediately spoke, greeting the company, and indeed took charge of the sitting, seeming to be always at hand to assist in identifying spirits and making explanations. He gave a lady present a minute description of the ailment of her son, and suggested a course of cure. Lights were seen in the cabinet, and there was plainly seen going round the circle the form of a child who turned out to be a little grandchild of the Admiral. 'Grayfeather' spoke with a gentleman regarding a message of warning he had transmitted. My brother came and spoke to me about family matters. Bournell manifested and held a short conversation with Admiral Moore respecting the taking of spirit photographs. But perhaps the most convincing part of the sitting was the display of lights. 'Two brilliant crosses of light were seen in the middle of the room and a light like a full moon. All the sitters agreed that they had never seen such wonderful phenomena of lights.' (Quoted from stenographer's notes.) 'Julia' concluded the sitting by a little address in her usual sweetness of language.

June 27th, 7 p.m. Failure.

July 1st, 7 p.m. 'Dr. Sharp' spoke to me, saying that he was sorry that attending the séances interfered with my work, but that I should be rewarded for my labours. My brother also spoke to me and told me much about certain business which I have found since to be perfectly correct. During this sitting I saw much bright light, and once when the trumpet fell near my feet and I stooped to pick it up a light seemed to exist on the floor so that I saw the trumpet and picked it up. 'Julia' spoke at great length with Miss Harper with regard to the future carrying on of the Bureau, and to me this conversation was the most natural and impressive that it had been my pleasure and privilege to listen to during the whole number of sittings I had attended.

July 4th, 7 p.m. A very large circle, about twenty in all. Some little time elapsed before there was any manifestation, when 'John King' spoke his greeting. Almost immediately one of the sitters (a gentleman with a foreign name) asked 'John King' something which he resented, and no further phenomena took place.

I should have liked to describe the impression these experiences have made on the mind of one who had seen manifestations of the above kind for the first time (and up to the present has not discovered any sign of internal psychic powers), but space forbids.

(Signed) M. E.

(To be continued.)

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THE secretary of an energetic society in the North writes: 'The introduction of "LIGHT" to our bookstall has been quite an acquisition, and many eulogistic references are heard by the committee. We confidently expect to increase our order shortly.' We wish other societies would follow this example; it would increase our usefulness and enlarge our circle of friends.

OFFICE OF 'LIGHT,' 110, ST MARTIN'S LANE,  
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## Light:

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### THE MAIN ISSUE.

It is a favourite trick of some controversialists, when they find their opponents' main position too strong for them, to resort to side-issues. The ruse is a cheap one, but in the heat of discussion it occasionally succeeds. Defeated on the important questions, the opposing debater endeavours to turn the flank of the victorious side by allusion to some petty scandal or other unfavourable circumstance reflecting on the credit of the cause he attacks. His friends amongst the auditors are quick to catch up the point, and the stroke is driven home by a burst of derisive laughter. It is an ancient artifice, but transparent as it is, it often suffices to capture the unthinking who fail to perceive that such tactics are a clear evidence of weakness. It is no valid argument against revealed religion that the Rev. Mr. Dash lived an immoral life, or that the pious Miss Blank became demented by continual brooding on the 'unpardonable sin.' If every system of morals or philosophy had to stand or fall by the lives of the least reputable of its followers, it would be a bad thing for humanity. Chaos would have come again, and faith would find no foothold anywhere. Fortunately the reason of the few is proof against the unreason of the many, and the sense of proportion is never wholly lost.

These considerations apply in a marked degree to our own movement. It is one that is especially liable to the attacks of shallow and disingenuous critics well calculated to mislead the inexperienced observer; and although confident of the ultimate vindication of our truth, we are not disposed to give the least advantage to the enemy. Hence our continual insistence on the main principles of our subject. On these our attitude is both defensive and aggressive. We affirm the reality of a spiritual world and its unity with this world, and we appeal to the experience of humanity in all ages, and especially to the experience of to-day, when, for the first time, Science, so long concerned with the externals of things, has been drawn by the very pressure of life into contact with its more interior forces. Science has now reached a point where it has the choice of advancing into worlds unrealised or of describing an undignified circle. True, some scientists will prefer to adopt the methods of the barn-fowl and fly round and round in a lumbering fashion, but there are eagles amongst them, and they will soar upwards after the manner of their kind.

From whatever standpoint we regard the position of Spiritualism, one thing emerges with clearness, and that is the clamant need for a bold proclamation of its central doctrines. A general recognition of the fact of a future life that is both natural and progressive is of vital importance to the thought of the world just now.

Only the strongest souls can move forward without such a stimulus, and they, as is abundantly evident, are often

sadly discouraged by the apathy of their followers who flag and hesitate for want of that quickening touch which a perception of an immortal destiny alone can supply. They may admire the heroism that would sail uncharted seas, but they would fain know something of the land to which the voyagers are bound. 'Is there any such land?' they ask, and the navigators can only return doubtful or evasive replies. The ordeal of Columbus in soothing his discontented mariners was slight in comparison with that of some of the leaders of agnostic or materialist movements to-day, for Columbus had a firm faith in the existence of the new world he was seeking, and these have none. They are urged on by the deeper laws of their being, but the meaning of those laws has not yet dawned upon their minds. And their followers who have not advanced to the stage when they can feel consciously the urge of life grow sullen and mutinous.

Elsewhere smaller souls sit down to enjoy what of life they feel is assured to them. 'Let us be as happy as we can now,' they say, 'for we shall be dead for a long time.' And the matter troubles them no further until the soul awakens, and the question is no more to be put by.

How great the transformation that could be worked by the reception into the general mind of the idea of the true meaning of life and death! The leaders would be inspired with a definite hope and purpose with which they could infallibly sway those who follow them. The world at large would awaken to the falsity of many of its ideals, and man, realising at last his true dignity, would wonder that he had so long been pleased with paltry things. Progress would gain a larger meaning than it had ever yet known. With so much worthless cargo to be thrown overboard the great Argosy of life would gain immensely in lightness and speed, and would sail for no uncertain port.

That time will come, and we can all hasten its coming. All great changes begin in the world of thought. Our thought determines our attitude towards life, and influences more or less the attitude of others. A conviction of the essential divinity of mankind, even when unspoken, finds subtle reactions from other minds. But when that conviction is proclaimed in speech as well as in thought and action, the effects are stronger and more wide-reaching. It finds a response in many minds, for there are some to whom the mere utterance of a truth for which they are groping is a rare and welcome thing. And strong, true thought has a permeating power. Truth needs no signs and wonders to attest its reality. It convinces by its presence.

Amid a host of cults and schools concerned with minor questions our main principles stand firm. They are never without witnesses, and vindicate their truth constantly through illuminated minds or through the agency of facts which alone can appeal effectively to the intellect. They stand above and without all the clamour of sects and the multitude of conflicting ideas regarding the next world which bring confusion and bewilderment to the quiet mind. Let us refuse always to be drawn into side issues, but hold firmly to our cardinal points. Then we shall be no more 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.' All the faiths of all the ages testify for us, positively by their existence and teachings, and negatively by the fact that, just in so much as they lose touch with the sources of their inspiration in the unseen world, so they lose their influence on the minds of mankind. The vanguard of Science and Philosophy has already penetrated to the confines of the higher realms of life. There is no going back for them or for us. We shall have the sun presently. In the meanwhile let us not waste time in quarrelling about the pattern of our lamps.

## UNWILLING WITNESSES.

BY H. DENNIS TAYLOR.

That some of the most telling evidence in favour of the Spiritistic hypothesis is to be found in works on psychic research written by non-Spiritualists is known to many students of Spiritism. A very good instance of this is furnished by Dr. Maxwell's book, 'Metapsychical Phenomena,' published in 1905. I have just been reading with the greatest interest this remarkable book, which is brightly written and singularly free from dogmatism. But the attitude of the writer and his co-worker, Professor Charles Richet, has filled me with a good deal of astonishment. Dr. Maxwell and, perhaps, Professor Richet too, may be described as bearing much the same relation to French psychic research as the late Thomson Jay Hudson bore to American. All three furnish interesting psychological studies. Dr. Maxwell publishes in his book some of the remarkable experiences of Professor Richet with the medium, Madame X., which give us an interesting insight into the curious mental attitude towards Spiritism held by that distinguished French physiologist.\*

Those who have read this case of the personification of Antoine B., a deceased young friend of Professor Richet, through the clairvoyant mediumship of Madame X., will remember with what completeness Antoine B. identified himself, although there had been no possibility of Madame X. having normally acquired any detailed knowledge of him. It was also a curious fact that Antoine B. also appeared in vision to, and was correctly described by, another medium, M. Meurice, through whom he gave several somewhat evidential messages. Yet Professor Richet shows great reluctance to admitting the Spiritistic hypothesis as an adequate explanation of the phenomena, so far as it implies *human* survival of bodily death. Is not Professor Richet's attitude towards the great question of human survival to be regarded as typical of that of most physiologists and biologists? Is it not symptomatic of the notoriously materialistic trend of those sciences? Professor Richet openly acknowledges the great difficulty he experiences in regarding a future life as even probable. Discussing the question of survival, he says: 'But, then, what a number of objections such an hypothesis raises! How is it possible for the consciousness to survive after death? How can intelligences which suffer birth escape death? A beginning implies an end; birth implies death: the one involves the other'; and elsewhere, 'Happily this survival is improbable. A lamp goes out when the oil is finished. The consciousness will become extinguished when it lacks carbon and oxygen.' This sceptical, or, at least, agnostic attitude towards the question is only too typical of those who have devoted themselves to physiological and biological studies, and in many cases the very interest excited in them by the study of supernormal phenomena depends upon a tacit initial assumption that the phenomena will be found explainable either by biological laws already known, or by an extension of the same. Scientific studies, at any rate if too exclusively pursued, have an inherent tendency to atrophy those religious aspirations of which the desire for a future higher life is the most vitally important. Darwin furnished a parallel example when he openly confessed that all his former love of poetry and fiction had withered up in him owing to his exclusive devotion to scientific lines of thought. But even Professor Richet frankly confesses, 'Our ignorance is so profound that everything is possible. Metapsychics is making such progress that the proofs, either negative or positive [of human survival of death], may perhaps be forthcoming.'

Doubtless Professor Richet penned the above words in an unguarded moment. After using such arguments as those first cited, it is with immense surprise that we find Professor Richet, in a letter to Dr. Maxwell, in which he betrays a naïve anxiety to avoid recourse to the Spiritistic hypothesis as an explanation of the phenomena exhibited by Madame X., falling back upon the following alternative hypothesis:—

Other forces, such as *genii*, demons, angels, &c., may exist,

\* Professor Richet's experiences with and tests through Madame X. were also published in 'Annals of Psychical Science' for January-March, 1909.

as strict logic commands us to admit. There is a certain impertinence in supposing that, in the infinite immensity of worlds and forces, man is the only being capable of thinking. It seems to me necessary to admit that there exist intelligent forces in Nature other than man—forces which are constituted differently from him, and are consequently imperceptible to his normal senses.

This is out of the frying-pan into the fire with a vengeance! If Professor Richet can entertain the possibility of the existence of such intelligences as these, existing quite independently of physical bodies, then what becomes of the difficulty in believing that human intelligences may likewise continue their existence in a disembodied state?

There occur numerous passages in Dr. Maxwell's book showing that he also is practically an agnostic on the question of survival, so far as it is based upon those metapsychical phenomena usually called Spiritistic. In fact, he confesses himself to be a reincarnationist, but quite independently of any Spiritistic teachings such as those obtained by Allan Kardec. He places no faith in such, and yet he openly confesses that he has not laid himself out to systematically study the more intellectual phenomena in the way of tests of identity, &c., which loom so largely in the experiences of convinced Spiritists; he is chiefly interested in investigating and establishing the simple physical phenomena, such as raps, luminous phenomena, movements of objects and levitations without contact; and in that respect his work has been invaluable. Nevertheless his book contains a few most remarkably convincing phenomena of the higher order of manifestations, which, like Hudson, he seeks to explain away as proceeding from secondary dream personalities of the medium, or from a sort of composite or collective consciousness emanating from the medium and sitters. But whether this consciousness, or 'personification,' as he generally calls it, proceeds from the medium or the sitters, Dr. Maxwell repeatedly insists upon its remarkable suggestibility, although he narrates plenty of evidence clearly establishing the wayward insistence of the personification upon its professed identity and its own opinions. For instance, he naïvely remarks (p. 65):—

Now I believe the personification is, as a rule, extremely suggestible. I say 'as a rule,' for there are occasions when it gives proof of remarkable obstinacy; this is the exception, and I ought to say that when the personification shows a decided will of its own, there is no struggling against it.

Now it is just a few such inconveniently obstinate cases as he refers to and describes which furnish very strong evidence indeed, as both he and Professor Richet are obliged to confess, for the Spiritistic hypothesis.

Perhaps the most important case in illustration is the personification of 'H. B.' The medium concerned was a young and highly-educated man, M. Meurice (then aged thirty-two), who had been through a medical curriculum, was naturally of a sceptical turn of mind and at first extremely reluctant to yield to Dr. Maxwell's importunities seriously to study and experiment with his own obviously mediumistic capacities. However, he was eventually persuaded to study his own phenomena in earnest. These consisted in veridical visions, messages by raps and by automatic writing. 'H. B.' had been a great friend of Dr. Maxwell, had led a very retired life, and died at an advanced age in Bordeaux. The medium had never met with or heard of him, nor had Dr. Maxwell told Meurice any particulars about him. A remarkable series of visions and automatic communications, ostensibly from the twelve-years-deceased 'H. B.,' were obtained. Space will not permit of a detailed discussion of the case, but we find the following proffered tests of identity tabulated by Dr. Maxwell as follows:—

A. About himself, his person, we find: 1, 2 (V). Two ways of wearing his beard. 3 (V) (R). A peculiar mark near the eye. 4, 5 (V). A very peculiar walk; right leg shorter than the left. 6 (V). The hair was fairly well described. 7 (V). The eyes were not well described. B. Details about his clothes and habits. 8 (V). An unusual shape of slipper. 9 (V.) The shape and colour of his cravats. 10 (V). His walking-stick. 11 (V). The manner in which he passed the last six years of his life in an armchair. 12 (V). The shawl which habitually covered his legs. 13 (A). His habit of taking a glass of brandy and water every afternoon at 5.30. 14 (A). His allusion to his brother L., and to his death. 15 (V). A gold chain and pendants

which he never possessed; followed, however, by the rectification of the error. 16 (V). The detail of the 'Temps.' ('H. B.' used to habitually take in that paper.)

The (V) inserted after some of the numbers means that these details were seen by M. Meurice in visions of 'H. B.,' and the letter (A) indicates automatic writing as the means of communication. 'H. B.,' the medium stated, often seemed to him to exclaim 'Thut! Thut! Thut!' when trying to impress himself upon his clairvoyant vision. 'A curious coincidence,' observes Dr. Maxwell, 'for this was a most characteristic habit of "H.B.'s" when impatient.' Assuming the impossibility of any normal knowledge on the medium's part of the late 'H.B.' I would like to ask anyone even superficially acquainted with the mathematical treatment of the probabilities of such coincidences to estimate roughly the chances against at least twelve of the above details being given accurately according to the facts. It would amount to some hundreds of millions to one!

'But,' says Dr. Maxwell, 'I am fully aware that the above details have no demonstrative value, for I knew them all, and the hypothesis of thought transmission can explain them quite as well as the spirit hypothesis.' He then proceeds to give cases of information about matters being given which was *not* in his own mind at the time, but subsequently verified. Further on he writes:—

If we examine in a general manner the character of the 'H. B.' personification we are, perhaps, obliged to admit that it presents a Spiritistic appearance. This appearance is all the more singular, in that it manifests in a centre where the Spiritistic hypothesis is looked upon with disfavour.

The medium, M. Meurice, was not a Spiritualist any more than Dr. Maxwell. It will be observed that Dr. Maxwell, like the late T. J. Hudson, inclines towards the hypothesis of personifications by the subconscious mind of the medium, which is assumed to glean the necessary information by telepathy from Dr. Maxwell's mind, as well as get its suggestive clue therefrom as to what character it shall impersonate. Dr. Maxwell seems to forget that there exists scarcely any good experimental evidence of the telepathy of abstract thoughts or memories between one *subconscious* mind and another—at any rate, nothing like the cogent evidence which exists for the telepathy of impressions intentionally and actively realised by the waking consciousness of the transmitter. Says Dr. Hyslop: 'Telepathy, I repeat, is acquiring present active mental states in a supernormal manner'; and, further, 'Especially do I respect the scepticism which denies that telepathy can filch knowledge subliminally and systematically from living people at pleasure.' ('Psychical Research and the Resurrection,' p. 328.)

But, after all, perhaps the strongest argument against Dr. Maxwell's attitude is one that is really suggested implicitly, but not explicitly, by himself. After so systematically invoking suggestion as the magic wand which starts the subconscious mind of the medium on its play-acting *rôle* of impersonating a deceased person, we may naturally ask why, on such an hypothesis, the subconscious mind of this medium did not seize upon and act out the very suggestion which, under the circumstances, was most likely to be derived from the mind not only of Dr. Maxwell but also of the medium himself; they were both disbelievers in the Spiritistic hypothesis but believers in the sufficing power of the medium's subconscious mind to work the phenomena. Why, then, did not the medium's subconscious mind act upon this predominant suggestion and own itself to be a secondary personality of the medium, or the medium's subconscious mind? Why should it be inherently more averse to doing this than to thinking itself or calling itself 'H. B.'? Why should it so persistently assume a *rôle* which it is supposed by telepathy to know or infer will be regarded with disbelief by the very witnesses for whose edification it is manifesting? Dr. Maxwell remarks concerning the medium:—

He refuses to accept the explanation which the personifications offer of themselves; they claim to be human beings who have once lived on earth. Up to the present they have never pretended to give us any information touching the life beyond the tomb. The indications they have given rather tend to direct

our experiments, and to try to formulate premonitions. 'H. B.' seems to have given himself the task, chiefly, of establishing his identity. This desire appears to be his leading—I scarcely dare to say generating—idea.

Can we wonder at 'H. B.' refusing to impart any information as to life beyond the tomb to two such sceptics as these, and confining himself to trying to prove his own identity? It is just the line of procedure adopted by Myers, Dr. Hodgson and George Pelham and many other spirits in a like predicament, through the mediumship of Mrs. Piper and others.

And yet, granted the supposed histrionic and inventive powers of the subconscious mind, once let loose, I fail to see why it should not indulge in profuse imaginary descriptions of the life beyond. It looks, after all, as if the systematic reticence of these various controls on such matters, when communicating with scientific sceptics, and their confining themselves to the more prosaic line of proving their own identities, constitute very strong evidence of shrewd intelligence and of a concerted plan whose purpose is to convince a purblind humanity of its higher destiny.

It is the boast of science generally that it aims at the ascertainment of Truth (with a capital T) independently of, and, if need be, in defiance of, our most cherished religious convictions. And there is a great proneness, even among scientific minds of a pronounced materialistic bent, to indulge in highly plausible talk about the love of Truth for its own sake; the 'fearless search after Truth' is spoken of with bated breath as a veritable religious shibboleth. Such talk on the part of an avowed materialist is, from a philosophical point of view, the sorriest cant possible, for from whence can the pursuit of Truth in the abstract derive any sacredness whatever, if not from the fact that a personal God exists and rules, and that a future progressive existence is in store for all human beings? Apart from these two pivot doctrines of all religion, the pursuit of abstract Truth for its own sake loses all claim to a sacrosanct character, and thenceforth many so-called scientific truths had far better be suppressed than be published abroad. To my mind this seemingly sincere reverence for Truth at any cost professed by men who are avowed materialists is one of the strangest and most significant psychological phenomena that I know of, and furnishes one of the strongest of indirect arguments in favour of the existence of a personal Creator and a continued life beyond the grave. Let it be once conceded that there is no personal God interested in human lives and responsive to human aspirations towards advancement, and no future life, then 'Truth' becomes of no importance whatever except from a utilitarian and commercial point of view. True, many systems of ethics, for the observance of everybody except the writers thereof, will be published from time to time; but the practical rule for those who have given up all belief in the above two cardinal religious beliefs will be, if they are logically consistent, every man for himself (as long as he keeps within the law), and the devil take the hindmost! Therefore I fail to understand the attitude towards psychical research adopted by those who profess to regard it as a merely scientific problem, to be approached in a spirit of scientific impartiality, if not indifference, instead of being an inquiry whose affirmative issue is of the most vital importance to the future well-being of the human race. The issues at stake furnish a case of what the late Professor William James, the sanest of all modern philosophers, called a 'living option,' and for my part I feel a strong sympathy for those investigators who approach the subject of psychical research with a judgment somewhat loaded in favour of the Spiritistic hypothesis, even though it may err sometimes on the side of over-credulity. Every man who is something more than a mere scientific clod will naturally be predisposed to the only interpretation of metapsychical phenomena which accords with his higher religious aspirations, and which alone makes 'Truth,' in its higher aspects, worth striving after. Hence the extremely sceptical and even the 'sitting on the fence' attitude of many scientific agnostics towards psychical research seems to me not so much a proof of proper scientific caution as of a spiritual atrophy, and sometimes also an unconfessed fear of ridicule; but neither of these charges can be urged against Dr. Maxwell, who is not a materialist, but whose attitude is an honest but somewhat peculiar one, exhibiting, as it does, the obvious inconsistency which I have attempted to point out.

\* In the course of my reading of Spiritistic communications, I have come across only one case of a communicating entity claiming to be the subconscious mind of one of the sitters.

### 'MR. STEAD' ON REINCARNATION.

We quote the following from the 'Editorial Notes' in 'The Harbinger of Light' for August, merely premising that Mrs. Annie Bright, the Editor, is receiving, by automatic writing, a series of articles purporting to be from Mr. W. T. Stead, which she is publishing in 'The Harbinger':—

Knowing that reincarnation is a subject upon which people's opinions differ widely, and that no good has ever resulted from a public discussion of its claims, it has been left untouched as incapable of proof. It is a subject upon which everyone must be fully persuaded in his own mind, as Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, says with reference to the observance of days and so forth. Apart from the weakening effect it has on character to attribute conditions of this life to good or bad actions in a previous existence, the main fact which is the aim of this journal to prove—the continuity of life—is not affected thereby in the least. And so it came as a surprise to be given 'Reincarnation: Its Truth and Falsity,' as Mr. Stead's subject for August in the series, 'What Life in the Spirit World really is.' . . . It is not intended to enter on any discussion of the merits or demerits of reincarnation in these columns or to point out the many weaknesses and contradictions in the statements made by its upholders.\* These must be weighed by the individual, for on his head alone rests the responsibility of a right decision. It may safely be left to common sense—which is claimed to be another word for genius—to decide.

In the article referred to above, Mr. Stead (if it be his) states that before passing over he had not definitely made up his mind on reincarnation, but he has now found out 'the way that this fallacy about reincarnation has crept in.' Continuing, he says:—

People really know nothing of the perpetual interaction there is between the two worlds—absolutely nothing. Yours is densely materialistic, and reincarnation, as given forth by its advocates, is simply a materialistic explanation of a spiritual supersession. People will have to rise above the idea of coming back to a body. When once started on its individual career, no spirit goes back to a mortal frame; but there are endless ways of influencing, more or less, those on earth, and this is the foundation of the idea. . . . Of all the dogmas that retard the soul's development, that of reincarnation is the worst in its effect on the human race. It keeps down individual effort, which is everything. . . . There is no place for temporising in a thing like this. There is absolutely no foundation at all for the dogma, and it has come about from taking spirit control for spirit reincarnation. It is a monstrous idea. I do not write bitterly about it, but reasonably. In life I could not trim my sails to suit people's whims, neither can I do it now. I am much stronger about this than ever, as I see the necessity of open direct statements concerning all these great subjects. . . . If you saw here the masses of spirits still Catholics, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Reincarnationists, and others not yet progressed into the Absolute, you would understand how, with other dogmatists, reincarnationists cling to their belief, give messages to those on earth affirming its truth and so perpetuate what is a misconception.

It is not possible for me to describe in words what the Great Awakening on this side of life revealed to me. All my previous ideas of spirit control were shattered at once. These were all too small, too materialistic, and I stood amazed at the wonders that lay stretched before me. From a great central Source of Light which is even yet not explained to me, proceed vibrations to every part of the universe, the basis of all this being Invisible Spiritual Force. It is only the density of souls still fettered by material conditions that stops its way. Every soul that has passed from earth life is in one spiritual grade or another. There is an ever ascending and descending army of enfranchised spirits, also angels, who for those on your earth do the work of missionaries. Sensitive souls are those who can receive the most of this great supernal power. They attract to themselves those angelic helpers of the same kind, for over here as well as in your world it takes many different souls to make a spiritual sphere. Those are together who think together. Some are quiet spirits, some are impetuous like myself. Everything is free, even our own way of growing nearer to the light. Mine is by rousing people to see truly, to act truly, to get rid of debasing ideas.

Reincarnation is a conception of spirit control that is entirely erroneous. It is a dangerous error, for it weakens the will-power and transfers the blame of wrong-doing on to another life or lives, and keeps the soul in fetters. There is not a spirit on the earth plane that has not in more or less degree some

attribute that belongs to a kindred spirit on this side. One of the great laws, that of vibration, plays a constant part in this. Musicians are drawn to those on earth gifted with musical faculties, often inherited from parents or bygone generations. Painters, in the same way, writers, and everyone in more or less degree, attract those who can help them. There is a great vibratory wave constantly moving between the two worlds. Theosophy steps in to explain how this genius or the other is not, as is the case, spiritually illumined by one of like kind in the spheres, but that he is actually a reincarnation of one of these great ones. There is nothing to justify this statement.

No individualised spirit has ever taken possession of an embryo in the womb. The statement about spirits waiting to be again en fleshed is absolutely without foundation. In India this doctrine of reincarnation is responsible for the large death-rate among the natives. They do not lift a finger to escape from disease. This life 'is only one of many,' they say; they are simply paying the penalty of evil-doing in an earlier birth. They die in hundreds. Souls in an unregenerate condition like this hover near the earth and repeat this fatal doctrine to willing ears or add their unseen influence to the deadening belief that emasculates the soul more than anything else. Rest assured that all compensation demanded by love and justice is given on this side of life to everyone who suffers from what is really the result of the vices of parents or past generations. It is the spiritual development in earth-life that is everything. Concentrate your thoughts on that. You have no past life to fall back upon as excuse for shortcomings in this. . . . Parents are often not fit to bring children into the world at all. All the while the mother carries the child she may not have one good thought, one real aspiration to be a good mother and to do all that is possible for this sacred gift to her. Some women—I may say many women—want to get rid of the child; do get rid of it. Oh, what a harvest of misery such are sowing! Robbed of the chance of earthly development, every one of these children on this side will be an accusing spirit. And here, again, love and justice come in. That innocent, unborn child is not allowed to suffer for the wrong-doing of parents; it grows up to the full stature over here. On earth it is different. Such as are born in bad conditions have to struggle all their lives against unequal odds, and as love and justice reign, all spirits are righteously judged on passing over, and ample reparation made for the wrong done in the little span of earth life. This small span of earthly existence is, after all, infinitesimal. There is the long open road of development before every soul, however bad its start may be. All this leads up to the general upliftment of the race spiritually and bodily. There is so much to do that I cannot find words strong enough to show how all this must be changed before the race can spiritually advance. There must be no unwelcome children, no loveless marriages. Then all these foolish ideas of reincarnation and the like will disappear as mists before the rising sun. The central truth of all, the one fact that must be proclaimed far and wide, is Individual Responsibility. *One Life, One Destiny, and Unlimited Power of Self-Development.*

### ITEMS OF INTEREST.

'Werwolves' (cloth, 5s. net, Methuen & Co., 36, Essex-street, Strand, W.C.) is the title of another book of horrors by Mr. Elliott O'Donnell. It is a collection of tales of men and women who are reported to have been fated, either through their own choice or through some innocent mischance, to spend part of their existence in the form of wolfish monsters possessed with a fierce craving for human flesh. Mr. O'Donnell seeks to invest these ghastly legends with an air of truth, but we should want a great deal more evidence than he affords us before we gave the least credence to any of them. What good purpose a book of this character can serve we cannot conceive, but it is not difficult to imagine the harm it might do to morbidly impressionable young people who chanced to pick it up and peruse it.

On Sunday evening last at Nottingham, among the questions from the audience the chairman found the following: 'Where did my husband's grandfather die?' 'Shall I recover the property that is legally mine? if so, when?' And 'In what town shall I find the missing will I am searching for?' These questions were not submitted by the chairman to the speaker, but we give them here as an illustration of the erroneous ideas which exist in the public mind regarding Spiritualism and the nature of mediumship. Surely Spiritualists and mediums have an important expository work to do to make it clear that we are neither fortune-tellers nor disposed to assist fortune-hunters, but are engaged in the study of spiritual science with a view to the deepening of spiritual life.

\* This applies also to 'LIGHT.'—EDITOR.

A kindly correspondent writes: 'My husband and I take the keenest interest in young people, and we are getting many into our society—several well-educated, level-headed young City fellows, too, which means good for the cause in the near future. I feel there is not enough interest taken sometimes just in this way, apart from Lyceums.' We agree. Spiritualism has a message to the youthful as well as for those of an older growth, and we are always glad to meet earnest inquiring young people.

In the North of England attention is being given to this phase of the work for Spiritualism with increasing success. Thus at Nelson, in Lancashire, there is a strong 'Liberty group,' or adult class, which meets every Sunday at 11 a.m. We have received a syllabus for the coming season showing that the speakers will deal with pressing present-day problems and up-to-date topics, such as 'The Trend of Modern Philosophy,' 'The New Psychology,' 'Is Nature Cruel?' 'Environment and Heredity,' 'The Nature of Materialisation,' 'The Light of Asia,' 'Walt Whitman, the "Seer,"' 'Reincarnation,' 'The Mission of Evil,' 'Joan of Arc,' 'The Life After Death,' 'Robert Owen,' 'Dives and Lazarus,' 'Theory and Practice,' 'A Chat about Pictures,' &c. This is a fairly comprehensive programme, and the fact that the average attendance is about sixty indicates that keen interest is evinced in the discussions. Some months ago we attended a similar group at Blackpool at which there was a large attendance and a valuable discussion followed the address. These practical, educational efforts should have good results.

We have received the second part of 'Visvakarma,' a work consisting of fine reproductions of examples, selected by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, of Indian architecture, sculpture, painting, and handicraft. The first series is devoted to sculpture, and ranges in its subjects from Buddha and the Hindu deities down to the animal creation. The part under notice consists of a dozen photographs of statuary, six being figures of Siva, and the rest of human beings. It may be obtained for 2s. 6d., post free 2s. 10d., from the author, 39, Brookfield, West Hill, N., or from Messrs. Luzac, 46, Great Russell-street, W.C.

The opening of the work at 110, St. Martin's-lane, of the London Spiritualist Alliance took place on Tuesday afternoon last, when a large company of Members, Associates and friends greeted Mrs. Minnie Nordica, of South Africa, who gave very successful illustrations of her clairvoyant powers. Her descriptions, which were definite and clear, and in some instances were accompanied by messages from the spirits whom she described, were readily recognised by the recipients. Those assembled felt that Mrs. Nordica is a valuable addition to the roll of mediums in London, and hoped that arrangements might be made whereby she could hold a series of special meetings at the Rooms of the Alliance.

'Ush,' by 'Adelphos' (cloth, 2s. net, John Ouseley, Ltd., Fleet-lane, E.C.), is evidently the work of a very lively imagination. An aged Fakir—more than a hundred years old (a few years more or less do not matter in these cases)—recognises in a young lieutenant of dragoons the tenth incarnation of Brahma as Vishnu, and evidences his devotion by repeatedly saving the young man's life. Taken to the Fakir's home beneath the Indus, and initiated into many mysteries, the lieutenant sees, as in a panoramic vision, every event in his life and its workings with other lives. He sees the spirit of his unfaithful wife descend till incarnated as a pariah dog, while that of her seducer sinks even lower till it finally takes form as a poisonous fungus. The hero is, however, consoled by the pure affection of a beautiful Indian princess, who, when they meet, is conscious of having known him for a thousand years (more or less), but as they cannot be united in this world, she commits suttee that she may be able to come to him in her 'aspiral body' whenever he longs for her presence. We wonder what moral value such stories as this can have.

In 'Nash's' magazine for October, Elbert Hubbard continues his helpful 'New Thought' items. His subject this time is 'The Health Habit.' 'Health,' he declares, 'is a habit, and a vast number of people in this country are acquiring it. They make it their business to be well every day and all the time, and the rules whereby they succeed are endorsed by every sound doctor. First, think health, not disease. Keep your mind on the ideal and picture the strong, happy, self-reliant person that you would like to be. Breathe deeply in the open air, holding the breath, then expelling it slowly through the nostrils. . . The greatest disturber of health is fear. Fear means impaired circulation; impaired circulation means impaired digestion; imperfect digestion affects the entire programme of life. To eliminate fear we must breathe more and eat less; work more and idle less; praise more and scold less; love more and hate less.'

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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

### Mrs. Wriedt and the Voices.

SIR,—The following absolutely unimpeachable testimony from a sitter of high standing, but whose name I am not at liberty to give, is very interesting by reason of the variety of the manifestations which constantly took place under test conditions.

Commenting in a letter to me on the so-called 'exposure' in Christiana, the writer, who had a great many private sittings with Mrs. Wriedt at Cambridge House, observes:—

'Such exposure is impossible. The phenomena are real beyond any possibility of doubt.

'I have had voices at Cambridge House with Mrs. Wriedt actually out of the room. I have had voices in the light. I have had on numerous occasions the voices mention incidents, names, and so on, that Mrs. Wriedt could not possibly know. I have held her two hands tight with my two hands, in compliance with instructions called out by a spirit in a loud man's voice, and had a table with a bowl of flowers on it brought to my feet with a loud clatter from the end of the room some twelve feet away, and, holding her two hands tightly as before, had the table carried back again. I have had flowers given me by a departed spirit on numerous occasions, taken from the bowl of flowers near me under conditions that rendered any kind of fraud or trickery impossible.

'I have had a heavy bowl of flowers lifted off a table and placed at my feet. I have had a heavy, portable electric light lifted off a table and placed in my hands. A flower has on more than one occasion been inserted in the mouthpiece of Mrs. Wriedt's trumpet. I have seen distinct and clear etherealisation of faces, materialisation of forms, and brilliant lights. All these things in the dark, certainly, but under conditions that rendered it impossible for Mrs. Wriedt to have done these things herself.

'How they can talk of an exposure I know not. The accusation is monstrous and ridiculous.'

Referring to the hearing of voices 'with Mrs. Wriedt actually out of the room,' I should like to add that on those occasions Mrs. Wriedt used frequently to come downstairs into the room where I was busy writing, and she remained there with my mother and myself till the sitter in question requested her return to the séance-room.—Yours, &c.,

EDITH K. HARPER.

Cambridge House,  
Wimbledon, S.W.

### Dr. J. M. Peebles and Mrs. Eddy.

SIR,—In 'LIGHT' of September 21st (p. 451), Dr. Peebles, in his paper read to the International Congress, states that Mrs. Eddy in her early days was a medium, next that she hoarded wealth, and, last, that she accused Spiritualists of dealing in malicious magnetism. Kindly permit me to say that the statement that Mrs. Eddy was ever a medium is, though I am perfectly sure Dr. Peebles was not aware of it, entirely untrue. It has been made so frequently, however, without proof, that people have repeated it without realising what they were doing. Next, as to Mrs. Eddy's fortune, it came to her quite naturally through the writing of her books. Anybody who knows anything of her is aware that she placed no value whatever upon money. If she had done so there were innumerable ways in which she could have multiplied her fortune over and over again. That fortune was left to the Christian Science Church: that the legality of the bequest has been questioned is merely owing to the fact that certain people have tried to take advantage of a technical point, and have so far completely failed. Finally, it is not accurate to say that Mrs. Eddy accused Spiritualists of dealing in malicious magnetism. Mrs. Eddy pointed to the fact that certain people did attempt to use what is known as malicious animal magnetism. She certainly did not imply that they did this as Spiritualists, though possibly people calling themselves Spiritualists may have done so, just as, for that matter, people calling themselves Christian Scientists have been known to do so. I think that Dr. Peebles has been misinformed in every point, and so has been inadvertently betrayed into making the statements he did.—Yours, &c.,

FREDERICK DIXON.

[In 'LIGHT' of February 18th, 1911, we gave the testimony of Mrs. H. P. Russegue that in 1867 Mrs. Eddy was in Boston, Mass., giving private sittings as a Spiritualist medium. No doubt Dr. Peebles will also give his evidence on this point.—ED. 'LIGHT.']

## Monsignor Benson and 'Hauntings.'

SIR,—May I be allowed to point out that the theories of Monsignor Benson as mentioned on page 460 of 'LIGHT' are in no sense original?

Mr. Podmore endeavoured to make this 'psychometric' theory cover all cases of hauntings, Mr. Myers did so partially, *i.e.*, as covering, possibly, a certain class of hauntings, and Mr. F. C. Constable in his book 'Personality and Telepathy' seems to take the same view, thinking that 'hauntings' are of little or no use as any link in the chain of the evidence of psychic phenomena for proving the survival of bodily death.

But it seems to me that although such a theory may very plausibly cover certain cases of haunting (such as the very curious experiences contained in the book, 'An Adventure'), there are yet many cases where no such theory appears to apply. In such cases, varied as the whole range of hauntings appears to be, there seem to be certain evidences of a meaning—a purpose, an objective cause. Such cases as the well-known S.P.R. one known as the 'Morton' case, recently described in a shortened form by Mr. Tweedale in 'Man's Survival of Bodily Death,' and by Sir W. F. Barrett in 'Psychic Research,' seem really to point to the presence of an unquiet spirit, often, as in this case, suffering, for a time, from the results of misdeeds in the earth life, which in course of time become expiated by repentance. A very similar case exists at the present in the town I live in, and is very fairly well known in society here. Then again, there are cases like the well-known one in Trumpington-street, Cambridge, in this instance being one only of a knocking, &c., which ceased immediately the human remains, afterwards discovered in the house, had received decent burial. A very similar case to this occurred at Chester some twenty-five years ago, in the house of connections of my own, well known to me.

I think people are very apt to be too fond of making one hypothesis cover all the facts—an error possibly made by many, ranging from the extreme Spiritualist to the extreme sceptic or materialist.

There is another portion of Monsignor Benson's theory which is identical with one held by the late Dr. Harvey Goodwin, Bishop of Durham, who was a vice-president of the Society for Psychical Research from the outset until his death. I recollect, in reading his 'Life' some years ago, that he thought that many, at all events, of the cases of 'apparitions' could be accounted for as a reversal of the usual process of vision (1) *Retina*, (2) *Optic nerve*, (3) *brain*. Such a theory is one that seemed to me extremely plausible, and, I expect, is well known to all experienced Occultists. It is perfectly compatible with the occasional agency of the consciousness of an entity formerly inhabiting a human body, but now existing apart from it. It would explain many, if not all, cases of 'wraiths' and of 'telepathic impression' between persons still in the flesh.

It is well known to physiologists that purely subjective hallucinations (*i.e.*, having no objective cause or 'intelligent operator at the other end of the line') can be caused by tickling certain parts of the brain or administering certain drugs. The same can be done by hypnotists. When, however, these have an evidently objective cause—as in the many well-attested cases of apparitions at the moment of death—the brain of the percipient will be the *instrument*, not the *creator*, of the 'hallucination.' The *process*, however, is in each case apparently identical—that is, the brain transmits through the optic nerve to the retina of the eye, which then casts the apparently objective vision. I am, nevertheless, perfectly aware that many alleged or well-attested cases—*e.g.*, where the phantom appears to have left some physical impress on matter—would not be covered, it would seem, by this theory. I think, however, that all investigators would do well to avoid making one, or even two or three hypotheses, cover a too wide number of facts.

I simply maintain that a great number of facts would appear to be very well covered by this theory of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, now more recently put forward by Monsignor Benson, and that these in no way militate against the existence, in many cases, of a discarnate entity as the objective cause; in fact, there are some such cases where no other explanation seems to me to be even decently plausible.

I think, therefore, here we have one of the many links in the chain—or rather *strands in the rope*—of proof of life after death.

This theory that I have alluded to I think also will dispose of the very frequent objection by superficial inquirers as to 'ghosts of clothes.'

I am fully aware that to many of your readers all I have said above is mere 'stale news,' but to many inexperienced inquirers these theories of Monsignor Benson, as quoted in your article, may at first appear to be destructive of much good evidence as to survival.—Yours, &c.,

GUY HEATON.

## Matter and Life.

SIR,—It is most strange that one of the earliest paragraphs of Professor Schaefer's address at the British Association has been very generally ignored. The paragraph runs:—

'Strictly and literally, the words animate and inanimate express the presence or absence of "soul"; and not infrequently we find the terms "life" and "soul" erroneously employed as if identical. But it is scarcely necessary for me to state that the remarks I have to make regarding "life" must not be taken to apply to the conception to which the word "soul" is attached.'

In fact, one of the strongest positions that materialists take up is based on this very general confusion between 'life' and 'soul.' In 'Personality and Telepathy' it is assumed that life will, ultimately, be found to be an evolution of matter, and the unscientific attitude of those who rely on 'life' for the continuance of personal consciousness is shown in the following paragraph:—

'How can we distinguish between the "life" of any primordial form of protoplasm and the "life" of man, unless we introduce the factors of the complexity of form and specialisation of function of the organism, man? But the moment we do this we make the life of man dependent on his material form of life; we define the "life of man" as meaning "the life of a being of particular complexity of form and specialisation of function." And so, when this material form is dissolved the life of man no longer exists; there is nothing personal to survive.' ('Personality and Telepathy,' p. 307.)

For instance, we necessarily define the human personality of other human beings as conditioned by their particular bodily form and particular brain activity. But we do not associate the personality of the disembodied with any such materiality. If we say the disembodied still 'live,' their 'life' is distinct from mere manifestation in bodily form. If, at any time, the disembodied personality is manifest in bodily form it has existence *apart from* such form. This 'life' cannot be 'life' as defined by scientific men.

It must, too, be never forgotten that that great man, Huxley, said he believed not only in matter and energy but in *consciousness as a thing in itself*. Professor Schaefer left the question of consciousness and personal consciousness untouched.—Yours, &c.,

F. C. CONSTABLE.

## Legal Aspect of the Fortune-Telling Problem.

SIR,—The action of the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis in reference to fortune-tellers (and hunters!) has raised quite a storm. Why?

The law on the point is very clear as laid down in the statute usually termed the Vagrancy Act, 1824, section 4.

The terms of this section are probably well known to your readers: 'Every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive or impose on any of his Majesty's subjects' is punishable as a rogue and a vagabond, and the maximum penalty is £25 or three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

This Act is a somewhat exhaustive one and metes out punishment (potentially) for a variety of offences. In all cases a guilty intent is necessary. At the same time it has been held that offering by advertisement in newspapers to cast nativities and answer astrological questions, or pretending by circular letter, in return for certain remuneration, to give a description of the person, liability to disease, occupation, most suitable marriage, &c., by the position of the planets at the nativity, was ample evidence that the prisoner had pretended to tell fortunes without proof that he had actually told anybody anything. So that the law itself is clear, but it is in applying it that difficulty arises.

Each bench deals with the *facts* in a different way. There are a number of decisions and opinions of learned judges, lawyers and others anent the matter, but what does the average person haled before the bench know of these? (And, if one may press the point further, what does the average bench know of them either!)

In the majority of cases the prisoner is half terrified. Never having been 'in trouble' before, he has visions of durance vile, *clientèle* gone, total ruin, being branded as a rogue and a vagabond, &c. Is it any wonder that persons in such a position take the quickest and easiest (and cheapest) course by pleading guilty, relying on their plea to 'his worship' to let them off lightly and they'll 'promise never to do it again.'

Now, there is an important point in connection with this. When legal advice is not sought (and perhaps in some cases where it is) the *full wording of the section* is not known. The 'summons' does not supply the knowledge, it merely calls upon the person to appear before the Court upon the information of So-and-So that the prisoner told fortunes by means of

cards, crystal-gazing, palmistry, &c., 'contrary to the statute.' If the summons set out fully the true offence—namely, the deceiving of his Majesty's subjects—the prisoner would truly plead: 'I told fortunes, but I did not deceive anyone.' Instead of which he often pleads *guilty to the charge* in all innocence and good faith, and is punished *under the Act*.

It only wants a few well-fought cases to have the matter better adjusted.

It seems a poor sort of argument to allege negligence on the part of the Commissioner in not moving before, as a kind of excuse for the whole thing. Two blacks never yet made a white. All true and honest mediums and researchers will welcome his action. If mediumship is good and genuine, it will be supported, and grow apace, without the necessity (apart from the bad taste) of peculiarly garbed sandwichmen parading the streets with alluring placards and 'throwaways,' for all the world like some penny gaff. One does not choose one's doctor, adviser, schoolmaster, or tailor by such methods. Why should one so choose one's medium, one's adviser in the most intimate and sacred things of one's own life? Good mediums do not lack recommendations any more than do professional men or women.

The Commissioner has indirectly done us—investigators and true mediums alike—a good turn in removing much of the cause for stigma that existed. We may safely assume that when he moves he has usually good reasons for doing so. Anyone who has mixed with such matters in the West-end knows that, as regards the practices of *soi-disant* mediums and prognosticators, very real fire has existed to cause the recent smoke in various sections of the Press. This action will quench much of it, and the publicity may happily quench the rest. We will sincerely hope so.

Let our great subject be put upon the pedestal which it deserves. Let it take its legitimate place among the sciences and religions, and the necessity for claptrap advertisements in Press and on hoardings illumined by grotesque faces, symbols, and what-not will go. Absence of demand will kill the supply.

The Spiritualistic and the psychic world will be all the cleaner, all the purer, and all the richer for the present upheaval. The earnest researcher will not be dismayed, but the seeker for a cheap sensation will be discouraged and drop out. Publicity is a wonderful purifier.—Yours, &c.,

H. BIDEN-STEEL.

#### Knockings.

SIR,—In 'LIGHT' of the 5th inst., 'Puzzled' gives an account of knockings heard by him. Kindly permit me to testify to almost identical happenings. Very frequently I have heard knockings in my bedroom, apparently proceeding from a rather large wardrobe, though at times I have heard the sound—generally a single tap, or stroke—in other rooms, in connection with other articles—*viz.*, a bookcase, piano, organ, and table respectively. I invariably read as I lie in bed before going to sleep, and when I have heard the knocking I have at times responded by a knock on my dressing-table, but never yet have I succeeded in getting an immediate repetition of the knock, though once or twice the sound has been repeated within, say, a minute. I live alone, but occasionally have visitors, who also have heard the knock, and have been greatly startled thereby.

I have not yet been able to accept these knockings as being of supernormal origin. I may say that I am not a confirmed Spiritualist, but have latterly been greatly interested in the occult.—Yours, &c.,

'PUZZLED,' No. 2.

Longton, Staffs.

[The fact that sounds resembling knocks proceed from articles of furniture is well known among furniture dealers. Probably these sounds are due to changes of temperature which affect the woodwork, or to the shrinking of the wood as it dries. If the knocks were produced by a spirit he would almost certainly respond to a request for a repetition of the sounds.—ED. 'LIGHT.']

EASTBOURNE.—A Spiritualist meeting will be held at Eastbourne, in the Town Hall, on Wednesday, October 23rd, at which an address will be delivered by Mr. E. W. Wallis. Full particulars next week.

MR. JAMES LAWRENCE, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, informs us that his proposed League for the defence of Spiritualism will in all probability be taken up by the National Union. He has lately received promises of help from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dundee. Having remonstrated with the Hull clergyman who recently made an onslaught on Spiritualists and getting no reply from him, Mr. Lawrence has written to Archbishop Lang inquiring whether clergymen in his diocese are free to make wanton attacks on the characters of their fellow citizens.

#### SOCIETY WORK ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6th, &c.

*Prospective Notices, not exceeding twenty-four words, may be added to reports if accompanied by stamps to the value of sixpence.*

MARYLEBONE SPIRITUALIST ASSOCIATION—*Shearn's Restaurant, 231, Tottenham Court-road, W.*—Mr. Percy R. Street gave a large audience a deeply interesting address on 'The Philosophy of Death.' Mr. W. T. Cooper presided.—15, *Mortimer-street, W.*—On the 30th ult., Mrs. Podmore gave remarkably successful clairvoyant descriptions. Mr. Douglas Neal presided. Sunday next, see advt. on front page.—D. N.

LONDON SPIRITUAL MISSION: 22, *Prince's-street, Oxford-circus, W.*—At 11 a.m., Experience Meeting; at 7 p.m., Mr. W. E. Long, address, 'Spiritualism: Imagination or Intuition?' Sunday next, see advt. on front page.—W. B.

SHEPHERD'S BUSH.—73, *BECKLOW-ROAD, W.*—Mrs. Connor gave spirit descriptions. Sunday next, at 7 p.m., Conference and Harvest Festival. Thursday, 17th, tea and social.—M.S.

BRIXTON.—8, *MAYALL-ROAD.*—The new officers presided. Sunday next, at 11 a.m., special circle; at 7 p.m., Mrs. Harvey (of Southampton). Lyceum at 3. Weekly circles at usual.

CROYDON.—ELMWOOD HALL, *ELMWOOD-ROAD, BROAD-GREEN.*—One of the members gave a good address on 'Opportunities.' Sunday next, Mr. P. R. Street; usual morning service, 11.15 a.m.; evening service, 7 p.m.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.—ASSEMBLY ROOMS, *HAMPTON WICK.*—Mrs. Neville gave an address and illustrations of psychometry. Sunday next, at 7 p.m., welcome visit of Miss Florence Morse, address and clairvoyance.

HAMMERSMITH.—89, *CAMBRIDGE-ROAD.*—11.15 a.m., service and circle; 7 p.m., Mrs. Miles Ord. Monday, at 8, metaphysical class conducted by Mrs. Graddon Kent. Thursday, at 8, address and clairvoyance.

HACKNEY.—240A, *AMHURST-ROAD, N.*—Mr. Robt. King gave an address on 'Occult Ideas Concerning Numbers.' Sunday next, at 7 p.m., Mrs. Podmore, address and clairvoyant descriptions. 20th, Mrs. Hylda Ball. Monday, at 8 p.m., circle. Inquirers welcomed. Thursday, at 7.30, healing; 8.15, circle (members only).—N. R.

BRIGHTON.—MANCHESTER-STREET (OPPOSITE AQUARIUM).—Morning circle well attended; evening, Mrs. Clarke gave a fine spiritual address and Mrs. Stephens sang. Sunday next, at 11.15 a.m. and 7 p.m., Mrs. M. H. Wallis, addresses, followed by 'descriptions.' Tuesday, at 3 p.m., working party; at 8, also Wednesday, at 3, circles; at 8, members'.—H. J. T.

BRIGHTON.—HOVE OLD TOWN HALL, 1, *BRUNSWICK-STREET, WEST.*—Mr. T. O. Todd gave an excellent lecture on 'Spiritual Power: Its Nature, Operation and Effects.' Sunday next, Mr. Horace Leaf. Monday, at 8 p.m., Mr. Leaf, 1s. admission. Tuesday, at 3 and 8, also Wednesday, at 3, clairvoyance. Thursdays, at 8.15, circle.—A. C.

SEVEN KINGS, ILFORD.—45, *THE PROMENADE.*—Mr. R. Boddington gave a vigorous address on 'Past and Present' and answered questions. 1st, Miss Violet Burton spoke on 'The Meaning of Spiritualism.' Sunday next, at 7 p.m., Mrs. A. Hitchcock. Tuesday, at 8 p.m., Mrs. E. Neville. 20th, Mr. C. W. Turner.—C. E. S.

CAMBERWELL NEW-ROAD.—SURREY MASONIC HALL.—Morning, Mr. W. E. Long spoke of the 'Phenomena and Philosophy of Spiritualism.' Evening, address by Mr. Brown on 'Lions in the Path.' Sunday next, at 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m., Mr. W. E. Long. Morning, communion. Evening, address on 'Phenomena, Public or Private, Which?'

STRATFORD.—IDMISTON-ROAD, *FOREST-LANE.*—Morning, Mr. Connor read a paper on 'Can Man Know God?' Evening, Mr. Pulham spoke on 'The Principles of Spiritualism,' and Mrs. Pulham gave descriptions of spirit people. 3rd, Mr. and Mrs. Connor, address and descriptions. Sunday next, at 11.45 a.m., Mr. Westlake, on 'Civilisation'; at 7, Mr. McLellan. 17th, Mr. Wrench. 24th, Mrs. Neville. 27th, Mrs. Mary Davies.—A. T. C.

HOLLOWAY.—PARKHURST HALL, 32, *PARKHURST-ROAD.*—Morning, Mr. J. Abrahall, address and clairvoyant descriptions; evening, Mr. Neville, uplifting address on 'The Wondrous Works of God.' 2nd, Mrs. E. Webster gave clairvoyant descriptions. Sunday next, at 11.15 a.m. and 7 p.m., Harvest Thanksgiving services; speaker, Mrs. Mary Davies; 3 p.m., Lyceum. Wednesday, Miss Florence Morse. 20th, F.O.B. Sunday, Mrs. Imison.—J. F.

BRISTOL.—144, *GROSVENOR-ROAD.*—Public services were inaugurated here, and the various controls of Mrs. J. S. Baxter gave instructive addresses, based on Matthew xviii., that chapter being chosen by a lady member, and on a subject submitted by a gentleman in the audience. Meetings are being held every evening this week, and from the whole-hearted response by the public, there is every evidence of an important future for this Mission for the cause of Spiritualism and the advance of light.