

Light:

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

"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!"—Goethe.

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

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

The somewhat burning question of test conditions occupies attention in most of the journals of Spiritualism. As it has penetrated to these columns, I may be permitted to adduce the views of the editor of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, as they bear on a portion of the subject under discussion. The *Psychological Review* (June, 1882) quoted Mr. A. E. Newton's account of a séance with Mrs. Crindle Reynolds, remarking with surprise on the slight attention created by it. The substance of Mr. Newton's affirmation was that the medium had been carefully searched by a number of ladies, of whom Mrs. Newton was one, and that subsequently "a bundle of white tarlatan, about three yards in length," had been introduced into the cabinet (which had also been searched) by what professed to be "dark or evil Spirits." The *Review* wished to know whether in the judgment of our contemporary, there was any good evidence to shew that such allegations were true. The *Journal* makes short work of the evidence of Mr. Newton. It denies absolutely that any efficient search can be instituted by two or three ladies who have to deal with a professional trickster. It refers with much cogency to the acknowledged fact that Custom House detectives become experts only after long training and practice, and (as Mr. Podmore subsequently agrees) states that any ordinary conjurer will readily defeat any unprofessional attempts at search. "If," says Mr. Podmore, "I had to secure Mr. Maskelyne in a cabinet or cupboard, under such conditions of light, distance, &c., as are in vogue at most materialisation séances, in such a manner as to preclude all possibility of deception on his part, I must frankly admit that I should not know how to proceed."

The case then stands thus. The editor of the *Journal*, after prolonged experience, thinks it impossible for ladies who are not expert detectives so to search as to make it absolutely certain that a small roll of muslin is not secreted. Mr. Podmore thinks it impossible to secure a medium under ordinary conditions such as obtain at séances, so as to effectually preclude imposture. When I ask him what conditions he thinks satisfactory he says, "I am rather inclined to agree with 'M.A. (Oxon.)' himself that no conditions short of full light can be considered satisfactory." The same view is held by the *Journal*. I believe, and is unquestionably gaining ground among all careful investigators. It is many years now since I first protested against secluding the medium, and that quite as much in the interest of the medium as of the investigator. It has suited the purpose of some critics to twist and misrepresent what I have said, but no amount of perverse and angry rhetoric can make it appear that it is any kindness to an honest medium to place him in an equivocal position where the best results must look like possible fraud, any more than it can disguise the plain fact that such conditions are precisely those that a trickster would select. He is no true medium's friend who so acts as to discredit all phenomena by throwing a doubt on their reality, but rather the man who protects the honest medium from fraudulent imitators by insisting on conditions that preclude imposture.

And if this be true in respect of the medium it is still more plainly true in respect of the investigator and the investiga-

tion. It ought not to be necessary to say that no evidence is good for anything that is obtained under tainted conditions. Were it not for the perversity of a section of the press and a few writers who affect to regard every attempt at demonstration as an insult to an "unprotected medium," it would seem absurd to state such a truism. That evidence on which rests so tremendous a fact as materialisation should be scientifically perfect. No pains should be spared to make it such, and to reproduce it, until, as the President of the S.P.R. excellently put it, "scepticism is buried alive under a heap of facts." So, alone, will conviction spread. I have read some very cheap sneers about higher aspects of Spiritualism of late; and it has been assumed that the phenomenal demonstration of the action of an unseen intelligence is regarded as a lower aspect, while the trance and clairvoyant phenomena are placed on a separate platform, higher and more important. So far as I am concerned, no statement could be more absolutely untrue. I know no such arbitrary and illogical distinction. To me the tiniest rap may be, so it be an honest fact, full of the deepest significance. I can understand that a blow from a floating chair on some thick head may appeal to its owner with a force that no intellectual method can equal. And I can conceive and do believe that in many cases the utterances that are assumed to be the "voices of angels" are of a very mundane origin, and should decidedly be classed among "the lower aspects of Spiritualism." The distinction between the high and low is of a totally different kind, and refers solely to the truth or falsity of the manifestation, of whatever kind it may be. One of the very highest manifestations of Spirit power is the little rap that assures the mourning mother of the nearness of her little child. One of the very lowest and most execrable is the rag baby that a cheating medium is enabled to palm off on her by the conditions under which credulous enthusiasm and confiding simplicity allow her to be placed. I know no other distinction of high and low; and I claim to be, as Disraeli said, "on the side of the angels," when I demand such conditions of observation as absolutely preclude fraud.

What those conditions may be is matter of debate, and can be ascertained only by repeated experiment. I am not so foolish as to demand that all phenomena shall be produced under prescribed conditions, e.g., of full and direct light. I know well that in many cases it cannot be done. But I do desiderate light sufficient for observation: and when the controlling intelligence requests that the light be so lowered that the eye can no longer do its work, *that should be accepted as a signal to close the séance*. Light is deterrent, we know, and it is not always possible to produce certain phenomena in good light. The medium's health, conditions of inharmony among the sitters, an electrical atmosphere, a dozen different causes, may lead the controlling intelligence to ask for easier conditions. These are most readily secured by diminishing the light, and may be asked for with perfect propriety. But it should be for the sitters to say when the light has been so diminished as to make exact observation impossible, and to act accordingly. I was present at the séance to which Mr. Podmore refers, and I am compelled to say that the light was quite insufficient for anything like exact observation. I did, however, being better placed than he was, make out enough of Pocha's little form to reject as improbable his hypothesis of its genesis: and I am not disposed to believe that any man with his senses awake would kiss a rag baby bobbing about at the end of a fishing-rod, without finding out the clumsy trick. That seems to me to verge on the credulity of incredulity, which is sometimes very great.

I write at a distance and without the power of comparing notes with Mr. Collingwood or Mr. Podmore, but, for myself, I saw nothing that was suggestive of any imposture—I put any such idea aside—but equally I saw nothing that ought to be

regarded as sufficient to carry any weight at all. It is but fair, however, to note that Mr. Collingwood wrote, after careful observation more than once repeated, under conditions of observation far more favourable than those enjoyed by Mr. Podmore and myself. No one makes the faintest imputation on the honesty of the medium. It would, perhaps, have been better to repeat the séance before writing, but there was no chance to do so, and repetition under such conditions is a sheer waste of time. I entirely agree in Mr. Podmore's opinion that "if tests are employed at all, they should be, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion." That, indeed, is the sum and substance of my contention. Let us have no room for error, so far as we can arrange. Let the medium be protected from a possible imputation that may be a grave injustice to an honest man; and let the investigation be so conducted that what is published as evidence may be a true contribution to our knowledge, and not a misleading *ignis fatuus* to follow which is to flounder into a quagmire. Surely, surely, there is no heresy in that request.

In view of the repeated question, What are satisfactory conditions for the investigation of materialisation phenomena? I may adduce from the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* an account of the plan adopted by Slade. "Two upright wires are fastened by clamps to the edge of a plain square table, and across their upper extremities a third wire is adjusted, horizontally from which hangs a piece of black cambric, two feet square, into which three sides of an opening are cut, viz., the right, left, and lower side," so that the cambric hangs as a curtain which may be raised when it is desired to look within. Behind this table, with its framework and black cambric curtain, is another black curtain, stretched across a corner of the room. Seats are put round three sides of the table, and at these the observers, including the *medium*, sit, facing the curtain, with hands joined on the top of the table. This simple preparation is all that is made, and it is put up by Slade and the observers when it is required for use. Light sufficient to tell the time by a watch held at arm's length is maintained. The first symptom of success in the experiment is the appearance of what I have elsewhere called "floating masses of luminous vapour" behind or at the sides of the first black curtain. On raising it, the space before the second curtain is found to be occupied by a white figure, having no clearly defined outline, its atoms obviously moving "as if it were a wreath of smoke or cloud." Suddenly, in the movements of this vapoury white cloud, shadows appear, which deepen into features, folds of dark hair, and the like, "not fixed, as in a portrait, but struggling for stability against the dissolving tendencies of this unstable cloud." Seldom, if ever, are more than three such apparitions presented at a sitting. It will be obvious, I think, that they and the conditions under which they are presented are perfectly satisfactory.

The *Spectator* (August 19th) in a very interesting review of Miss Cobbe's new volume of essays, "The Peak in Darien," quotes a story almost exactly parallel to that contributed by Mr. H. Wedgwood to the *Spectator* (August 5th) and reproduced in these pages. Mr. Wedgwood's is authentic, "told to me," he says, "by an elder sister who nursed the dying girl, and was present at the bedside at the time of the apparent vision." "Is the story of Miss Cobbe's," the *Spectator* asks, "an incorrectly given version of Mr. Wedgwood's, or one quite independent of it?" Miss Cobbe's story is as follows:—

"Another incident of a very striking character was described as having occurred in a family, united very closely by affection. A dying lady, exhibiting the aspect of joyful surprise to which we have so often referred, spoke of seeing, one after another, three of her brothers who had long been dead, and then apparently recognised last of all a fourth brother, who was believed by the bystanders to be still living in India. The coupling of his name with that of his dead brothers excited such awe and horror in the mind of one of the persons present, that she rushed from the room. In due course of time, letters were received announcing the death of the brother in India, which had occurred some time before his dying sister seemed to recognise him." M.A. (Oxon.)

Intellect is often a mercenary who will fight under any banner, and never stumbles over moral scruples.

We ask the special attention of our readers to the letter of Dr. C. Lockhart Robertson which appears on page 388. Private mediums who are able to obtain good physical manifestations, will greatly help the cause of truth if they will kindly place themselves at his service for a short series of sittings.

MR. COOK'S ESSAYS.

We have received several letters on the subject of the Essays of Mr. F. F. Cook, of Chicago.

J. E. F., Yarrington Rectory, writes:—"I have read with much interest the most original and valuable papers by Mr. Cook, of Chicago, but I should like to speak of one point which I wish were made clearer. Does Mr. Cook ignore our possession of all form and substance in the Spirit-world? I see that in his paper (August 5th) he says: 'But for all that, a form may represent the Spirit for the sake of the material illusion to which mortality is wedded.' Now this seems very vague, and wholly militates against Spiritual phenomena. Even Serjeant Cox (who seemed never to fully realise the objective presence of our disembodied friends) asserts that we enter the unseen world in our own form, and that form composed of *substance*, though not of *matter*. I feel sorry that such masterly contributions as those of Mr. Cook should have this flaw in them, and would be glad if others felt the want of more definite teaching in these most able papers."

Dr. Hitchman, Founder of the Liverpool Anthropological Society, says:—"I either am, or have been, a fellow, or correspondent, of every anthropological society in Europe, and have given in the old 'Gallery of Art' in this city (Liverpool), as well as in the Lecture Hall of the Free Library and Museum, a course of lectures on 'Transcendental Anthropology,' which was largely attended by members of learned societies here and elsewhere. Since that period I have been rejoiced to know of kindred testimony borne to truth by such able and competent witnesses as Dr. Carter Blake, Mr. J. Fred. Collingwood, and others. You ask, sir, for your readers' views of a communication by Mr. F. F. Cook, of Chicago, entitled 'The Doctrine of Embodiments.' I am 'insulting, common-place, and vulgar enough, to all philosophic thinking,' completely to reverse his conclusion, and affirm that but for the 'matter' of Nature, there would be no spiritual body in human nature. Proofs are at hand when required."

A. D. Bathell writes:—"Your contributor has evidently plunged without consideration into the subject which he has taken in hand, otherwise such a statement as follows could not have been made: 'In the world of souls there is absolute equality. All have the same origin and the same destiny.' It is difficult to comprehend upon what ground such a limit as this has been placed on the operations of the Godhead. The world of soul (not spirit) is so vast and its various states of unfoldment so many that to speak of an absolute equality for all souls, is contrary to the laws by which soul is governed. As to all souls having 'the same origin and the same destiny,' I prefer to think that it is the thought flashed forth from the thought-sphere of the Godhead which creates both the soul and its destiny, and that there are not two souls with the same destiny."

Mr. George G. Gill asks:—"Are we not justified in assuming the poorness of his case when so experienced a thinker in this domain as 'M.A. (Oxon.)' asks us for our 'facts'? In the definite sphere of science we concede the legality of the demand; the materialist and utilitarian shall likewise have fact, for it is their diet; but who will trace the underlying motive 'facts' of a great life and a noble religion, or who would dare to relegate to 'theory' Shelley's conception of a power

" "Which welds the world in never wearied love," because, forsooth, scientists are laying bare that terrific struggle for existence. Certain is it that we are each possessed of ideas which have been developed, but which most assuredly were not formed here; and to deny free exercise to these, because they rest rather upon instinct than 'facts,' we know to be the sheerest folly. If for every article of our faith we must have 'M.A. (Oxon's.)' prescribed 'foundation of fact' in what we shall be tempted to ask, does spiritual discernment differ from mere deductive reasoning? The conception of the non-existence of evil is more easily attacked than defended in a single paragraph. It is, however, imperative to challenge the justice of the epithet which our opponent deems applicable to adverse teachings, should this great principle be maintained. It is a necessary assumption that all our teachers from beyond the border 'ought to know,' and if, with a limited knowledge even as ours, they are still the advocates of a rudimentary truth, can their presentation of this latter be by any etymological strain fairly denominated a 'lie'?"

Mr. S. C. HALL.—The following has appeared in the *Western Daily Mercury*:—"Mr. S. C. Hall, F.S.A., has arrived in Plymouth for a fortnight's rest. He is a Devonshire man by birth, and an ardent lover of his native county. He is also one of the leading Spiritualists of the day, as well as one of the most active promoters of total abstinence principles. It will be remembered that Mr. Hall recently announced his intention to bequeath his valuable library to the Free Public Library of Plymouth, he having always evinced a warm interest in its welfare in correspondence with Mr. Wright, the librarian. The talented originator and editor of the *Art Journal*, whose 'Retrospect of a Long Life: from 1815 to 1883' is now in the press, may fairly be called one of the most noted literary men of the century. A year and a half ago, our readers will remember, in a special article we called attention to this 'Devonshire Worthy.'"

A TOKEN OF DEATH.

"Sceptical" was the expression used regarding myself by Madame Blavatsky on a card of introduction to Mr. C. C. Massey, which she gave me in Bombay in August, 1879. The word was used in regard to my attitude towards Spiritualism and psychological phenomena generally. The expression was fairly accurate of my position, and I think I may say is so still. Consequently, the narrative which I am about to give of a personal experience is told with, perhaps, a bias against marvellous manifestations.

In the autumn of 1877, Dr. J. M. Peebles, of Hammonton, New Jersey, U.S.A., author of "The Seers of the Ages," "Spiritualism Defined and Defended," and other works, on a second tour round the world visited Madras, where I was editing one of the daily newspapers in that city. Dr. Peebles called upon me at my office, and, finding him most agreeable in conversation and pleasant withal, I asked him to dine with my wife and myself. He did so, and after dinner we sat on the verandah of our house nearly till midnight, discussing various topics, but—as was natural in Dr. Peebles' company—chiefly Spiritualism. Dr. Peebles narrated many most interesting incidents which had occurred in his own experience, incidents which I met now and then with good-natured scepticism. On another occasion we had a visit from Dr. Peebles and much pleasant talk, chiefly of a Spiritualistic nature. After he had left us on the second occasion my wife and I had a chat upon the evening's talk, she seeming somewhat impressed with what had been stated by our American friend. I good-humouredly chaffed her on becoming a convert to Spiritualism, when she remarked in accents of sincerity which startled me at the time, "Well, William, you may laugh as much as you like, but I am *sure* of this, that it would not matter how many thousands of miles separated us, if you were to die I should know at that moment, while if I were to die away from you I am sure you would know." I did not answer the remark, and I do not remember that we ever touched on Spiritualistic matters again. At that time my wife was in fairly good health, but during the winter and early spring symptoms of decline exhibited themselves so unmistakably that she was ordered home for the summer. She left Madras in March, 1878, with the confident expectation of returning to me in August of the same year. We neither of us had any idea that her death was near.

The letters I received from England were of a generally assuring nature until Friday, June 21st. So, indeed, was the letter I received by the mail delivered on that day, but certain symptoms were described which gave me grave concern, more especially because my wife seemed to have no conception of their significance. I talked the matter over with some friends who called at my house in the evening, and they pooh-poohed my fears. But I could not shake off the alarm I felt, and I determined next day to keep myself free of worry by burying myself completely in my work. At that time Messrs. Longmans, of London, were bringing out my book on the "Famine Campaign"; by the Friday's mail I received from them nearly a hundred pages of proofs which I had engaged to send back in the mail steamer leaving on the following Wednesday. I began working at six o'clock on Saturday morning, and continued steadily at my proofs till eight, when I bathed and had breakfast. I resumed my work, and kept on without a break or interruption of any sort until about half-past twelve. Throughout the whole period I am not conscious that my thoughts once turned to my distant wife. Knowing I could do her no good by fretting, by an effort of will I shut all thoughts of her from my mind, and concentrated my sole attention upon my work. At half-past twelve, what with the concentrated attention upon the proofs and the effect of the intense heat of the city, I felt so wearied that I determined to rest a short while. (I should perhaps state that my writing-table was in my bedroom, a large, airy place, but a room connected with which were no associations special to my wife. I had given up housekeeping, and was "chumming" with a friend in a house which my wife had visited three times only, I think.)

I wheeled my office chair round, and placed it with its back to the table, noted the time by my watch, which was on the table (it was exactly twenty minutes to one), and at once dropped off into a deep slumber. I awoke with a start, was sensible of a strange experience, and found that only a very few minutes had elapsed since I shut my eyes. During that period I seemed to be in England, in a room I did not recognise, with my wife, who was lying, looking very pale, on a bed. I was holding her hand in mine. I do not remember that any words

passed between us, but I recollect a look of sweet rest and peace seemed upon her, and I *knew*, was *perfectly conscious*, that she had *just died*. While I was holding her hand in mine, I seemed to drop off into a sleep. My mother came into the room, and said, "I wonder, William, you can sleep, with Nellie only just dead." I answered, "You needn't wonder. Nellie is beyond all pain and suffering now. I have watched with her so long, and am so weary. Besides, I know she is at rest." Then I woke, and as certainly as I ever saw anything in my life, I saw my wife's form lying on the bed, with such a look on her face as I should expect to see had she a few moments before passed peacefully away. Rather impatiently I wheeled my chair round to the writing-table, and thought, rather than said, with a sigh, "Oh! dear, it seems no good. If I leave my work for a moment only I am worried about Nellie." Again, by an effort of will, I shut all thoughts of her from my mind, and proceeded with my work, oblivious of what had just passed.

Exactly a quarter of an hour later, my "boy" came into the room with the words, "Telegram, sar!" on his lips, and with one of the dull red oblong envelopes used by the Indian Telegraph Department in his hand. Without any foreboding, as I had got into the current of my work again, I opened the envelope rather carelessly, and was at once startled at noticing that the folded telegram was on yellow paper, a sign that the message was from England. I pulled the envelope open with a start, and found in it a message from my brother at Cambridge, saying, "Nellie is dying, here!" Strange to say, no thought of the intimation which I had received, that she was at that moment dead, crossed my mind. I was oblivious of the experience with which I had been favoured. Ordering my carriage to be got ready as quickly as possible, I drove to the telegraph office, and sent a long message to Cambridge, containing the words of confidence and hope in God and the Hereafter, which a Christian husband would naturally wish to whisper into a beloved wife's ear as she was crossing the dark waters of the River of Death. Then I returned home. The friend with whom I was living was on a holiday tour in Ceylon, and, with the exception of the native servants, no one was in the house. I passed a weary, anxious afternoon and evening, awaiting the telegram which I felt must soon come announcing death. It did come, about half-past eight in the evening, and ran as follows:—"Nellie died peacefully between seven and eight this morning." Partly to occupy my mind I drove to the telegraph office and sent off another message. On my way back, it struck me for the first time that there was five hours' difference of time between Madras and Cambridge, that eight o'clock a.m. at Cambridge corresponded with one p.m. in Madras, and that I had had the "token" of death which my wife spoke of when Dr. Peebles visited us, and I, in my scepticism, had not appreciated it. All the night through I remained in an agonising state of mind, mentally praying that if I had had a "token" the vision might be repeated. But the hours of darkness passed and no vision appeared. Nevertheless I could not shake off the sense of reality of that noon-tide scene which came back upon me with wonderful vividness.

I afterwards learned from my brother, in whose house my wife died, that soon after seven in the morning all her sufferings ceased. She was lying very quiet, with her eyes closed, when my brother stooped and said, "Nellie, is there anything we can do for you?" "No, thank you," she replied; "I am feeling so restful. And, do you know, it seems as if William were here by my side." Without again opening her eyes in a short while she died, no further words passing her lips, and the affectionate watchers by her side not knowing the exact moment of her death. I may add that my telegram with the words of comfort and assurance reached Cambridge too late to be of the service I intended. With a feeling which I cannot blame, my friends laid the yellow telegram form upon the breast of the dead and it was buried with her.

The story I have told above is a plain, unvarnished narrative. It was a year and a quarter after the above incident had happened that Madame Blavatsky termed me "sceptical" regarding occult science generally. I am not sensible of any change of opinion since August, 1879, and, as I have said, if I have written with any bias at all, it is with a bias against, and not in favour of, Spiritualism.

W. D.

[We have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with the writer of the above narrative. He is a gentleman of the highest honour and integrity, and complete reliance may be placed on every word he has written.—ED. "LIGHT."]]

Most of the shadows that cross our path through life, are caused by our standing in our own light,

OFFICE OF "LIGHT,"
4, NEW BRIDGE STREET,
LUDGATE CIRCUS, E.C.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

Reports of the proceedings of Spiritualist Societies in as succinct a form as possible, and authenticated by the signature of a responsible officer, are solicited for insertion in "LIGHT." Members of private circles will also oblige by contributing brief records of noteworthy occurrences at their sances.

The Editor cannot undertake the return of manuscripts unless the writers expressly request it at the time of forwarding, and enclose stamps for the return Postage.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

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THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

Through the kindness of Professor Barrett we have been favoured with a report of some of the investigations of members of the Society for Psychical Research which were not brought before the General Meeting, but which will be included in full in the forthcoming volume of "Proceedings." The following extracts are from the MS. placed in our hands :—

"During the absence of the subject [in some experiments in the 'willing game'] it was agreed that a mark should be made with a pencil round a sixpence which happened to be lying near a sheet of paper on the table before the subject left the room. In this case the hands of the willers were placed round Miss R.'s neck, and the action fixed upon silently willed. In a few moments Miss R. walked to the table, took up a pencil, and deliberately made a mark round the sixpence."

In experiments with a different subject :—

"Selected notes on the piano were four times in succession correctly struck. Here the hands gently touched the head. In the next, the hair only was touched. Certain books in a book-case (containing some hundred volumes) were chosen in the absence of the subject. In six consecutive trials the right book was taken down. Out of a total of 130 trials—of which the foregoing are fair samples—about 100 were correctly performed."

In remarking on these Professor Barrett says :—

"Instead of giving the details of all these experiments I may be permitted to summarise them by saying, that while in very many cases the muscular sense might have been a sufficient explanation, there were many others, very carefully tested, which could not rationally be so explained, and which pointed strongly in the direction of something new, such, for example, as mind-reading, as their only satisfactory explanation. In fact, the intervention of a second person, who was entirely ignorant of what had to be done, between the willer and the subject, the hands of each resting on the shoulders of the one in front, did not seriously interfere with the results obtained. Under such conditions difficult things were correctly done, involving complicated muscular actions, whilst we failed to do similar and much simpler things under the influence of deliberate conscious guidance."

The following is the record of some interesting experiments made by Mr. F. W. H. Myers :—

"The mother of Miss C. placed three of her fingers, not including the thumb, on the back of the young lady's head, the fingers resting apparently quite lightly. I drew on a piece of paper a rough sketch of a house, and showed the sketch to Mrs. C. Miss C.'s head was averted the whole time. No look was interchanged between her and Mrs. C. No other part of their persons was in contact. No one but Mrs. C. saw the drawing. I watched Mrs. C.'s fingers closely in full gaslight; they seemed to rest lightly on Miss C.'s head; no signals perceptible. The drawing was rudely reproduced, as though by a person drawing in the dark, one of the windows being drawn outside the outline of the house. I then wrote a sentence, and showed it to Mrs. C., taking care that Miss C. should not see it. I chose sentences in foreign languages that guidance might be less easy.

*In regere imperio.
Se de jō prender.*

Those were correctly written. Miss C. then pushed up her sleeve. Mrs. C. placed three fingers on Miss C.'s arm above the elbow, and in like manner Miss C. wrote (without having previously seen the words) the words :

Calma. This man.

The Greek words *μεθυ* and *αυαξ* were then written under the same conditions. They were very rudely written, but each letter was distinguishable."

Mr. Myers gives further report of similar experiments in another quarter, of which the following are the most remarkable, Mr. Myers, placing his hands on Miss R. B.'s shoulders, willed

her to strike on the piano the tenth note from the right hand end. He says :—

"She did so after a few seconds' fumbling. As I had opened the piano she might guess that I wished her to go to the piano, but she could not guess the note to strike."

Again he says :—

"Eight persons present contributed trifling articles—a half-crown, two pencil cases, small knife, key, handkerchief, two small purses. These were put in the pocket of a lady present, while Miss R. B. was out of the room. Miss R. B. re-entered the room. Miss M. B. touched her shoulders. Miss R. B. rushed to the lady who had the objects, pulled them out one by one, and with shut eyes gave each to its owner—Miss M. B. withdrawing her hands during part of the process, which was extremely rapid. Miss R. B. said she did not know to whom she was giving the things; had no sense of connection between the things and the people, merely an impulse to move first one way and then another."

Describing another experiment, Mr. Myers says :—

"I wrote the letters of the alphabet on scraps of paper. I then thought of the word CLARA and showed it to Miss M. B. behind Miss R. B.'s back, Miss R. B. sitting at the table. Miss M. B. put her hand on Miss R. B.'s shoulders, and Miss R. B., with eyes shut, picked out the letters CLARV—taking the V apparently for a second A, which was not in the pack—and laid them in a heap. She did not know, she said, what letters she had selected. No impulse had consciously passed through her mind, only she had felt her hands impelled to pick up certain bits of paper. This was a good case as apparently excluding *pushing*. The scraps were in a confused heap in front of Miss R. B., who kept still further confusing them, picking them up and letting them drop with great rapidity. Miss M. B.'s hands remained apparently motionless on Miss R. B.'s shoulders, and I can hardly conceive that indications could be given by pressure, from the rapid and snatching manner in which Miss R. B. collected the right letters, touching several letters in the course of a second. Miss M. B., however, told me that it was almost necessary that she (Miss M. B.) should see the letters which Miss R. B. was to pick up. Mr. B. said that Miss M. B. used at one time to write automatically the thoughts of persons sitting near her, though quite unconscious of what these thoughts were, the hand being moved without any perceptible influence on the brain."

Notwithstanding these and other results which Professor Barrett describes as "marvellous," some of the investigators question whether, if they had no other case than this to rely on, they should be justified in calling in the aid of any new hypothesis to explain the phenomena. But for the considerations brought forward in support of this view we must refer our readers to the "Proceedings" when they appear, as well as for much more matter of an interesting character, which we are not able to quote.

SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH; COMMITTEE
ON PHYSICAL PHENOMENA.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—May I ask a few lines space in your paper to say to your readers that the Committee on Physical Phenomena of the Society for Psychical Research, are most desirous at present to proceed with the investigation of their subject, and that what we specially desire is opportunity of witnessing in private circles the physical phenomena such as are from time to time recorded in your pages! I am at present at leisure, and ready to give my attendance at any such manifestations as may be made accessible to me, and I shall at once attend to any communications addressed to me at my chambers.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. LOCKHART ROBERTSON.

The Hamman Chambers, 76, Jernyn-street, S. W.

August 22nd.

MADAME BLAVATSKY AND THE HIMALAYAN
BROTHERS.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—In a recent issue of your valuable periodical, is a paper extracted from the *Harbinger of Light*, and headed "Madame Blavatsky and the Himalayan Brothers," and signed "Viator," as though the true name of the narrator were not publicly known as that of "The Hon. J. Smith, Member of the Legislative Council, N.S.W., Professor in Sidney University, President of the Royal Society, N.S.W.," &c., &c., who in January, 1881, stopped at Bombay, on his way home from Australia.

The "Hints of Esoteric Theosophy," a pamphlet published in April last, at Calcutta, relate, with the name of the author, J. Smith, the report given by the *Harbinger of Light*, whose reserve I cannot account for.—With kind regards, I remain, yours sincerely,

BARON J. SPEDALIER.

Marseilles.

LETTERS ON THEOSOPHY.

From an Anglo-Indian to a London Theosophist.

No. I.

[The subjoined letter, the first of a series designed to shew Spiritualists what Theosophists believe, was received by me from a gentleman whose initials will be recognised as those of a well-known name. He has every right to a hearing, and none can be other than grateful to him for such light as he can throw on a dark subject. It is necessary, however, that the foundation be firmly laid before we can follow him in his speculations. And here his first letter leaves much to be desired. I am not about to discuss the various points that he raises. But as to the very existence of the Adept Brothers, respecting which he says that it "would be incomprehensible to me that any reasonable person should disbelieve" if he had read the evidence, I aver that I consider the evidence weak in the extreme. Whether I be reasonable or not, I so think, and it is the writer's vigorous faith that alone impresses me. Were it not that he and two or three others like-minded are so firm, I do not think I should heed what was alleged. In that I may be quite wrong, but I have at least taken pains to read and judge impartially. Again, when it is said—"I believe that our Brothers are quite incapable of error when they make a plain statement about any phase of Spiritualism," I am compelled to rejoin that in the only instance within my knowledge where a plain statement about "a phase of Spiritualism" that was verifiable *was* made, it was totally baseless and erroneous, and that beyond the possibility of error on my part, or, indeed, without possibility of knowledge on the part of the Brother who made it. These matters lie on the threshold, and must be dealt with by some logical method, clear and convincing, and beyond mere assertion. I have felt bound to say so much; but no one will listen to "A. P. S." more readily than I.—M. A. (OXON.)]

The issue of "LIGHT" for June 24th, which has just reached me, contains some reference to the Theosophical studies in which I am deeply interested, and in which I am sure many friends of mine in London now exclusively engaged in Spiritual inquiry would be equally concerned if they happened to be living in this country. Mr. Eglinton, I see, bravely acknowledges—in the face, no doubt, of a prejudice against the subject among his friends—that he has acquired certain knowledge respecting some of the external facts on which we Theosophists rely as important, but he very naturally avows himself unacquainted with "the abstruse subjects generally set forward by those calling themselves Theosophists." Leaving these aside, he goes on to notice what he believes to be the Theosophical theory about Spiritual manifestations, viz., that these are produced by "spooks or elementals" in ninety-five per cent. of the cases, and in the other five by certain Adepts, who have the power of projecting their astral body to any distance at will. Now Mr. Eglinton has not quite got hold of the Theosophical view about Spiritualism when he expounds it in this very comprehensive manner. And I would ask you to remember that we here, a handful of Anglo-Indian Theosophists who have been writing on the subject, do not profess for an instant to have acquired an exhaustive understanding of the mysteries which underlie Spiritual phenomena so as to be able to explain them all. As Theosophists, we are not dogmatic adherents to a hard and fast creed, but students of the higher mysteries of Nature, exactly as Spiritualists are such students also. But we cling with great tenacity to a conviction that in studying these mysteries as Theosophists we have one great advantage over all other persons who study them in other ways. We are in more or less intimate relations with persons who have acquired what, in comparison with any other knowledge current in the world, may be called an exhaustive understanding of the mysteries referred to.

Now it is also important to remind English readers that we are not holding on selfishly to this advantage for our exclusive behoof; we have done our utmost to explain to the world the basis of our conviction that the Adept Brothers of the Theosophical Society are the kind of people so often described. It is not a question whether they are men possessing "some knowledge of occult science:" we contend that it has been demonstrated in various ways that their knowledge is of such a kind that it is beyond the reach of any critical estimate by people who are not Adept Brothers themselves. The grounds for that opinion have partly been set forth in "The Occult World," partly in a very remarkable pamphlet issued under the authority of the Theosophical Society, at Bombay, called "Hints on Esoteric Theosophy;" and more fully, if more vaguely in "Isis Unveiled." I cannot here recapitulate the proof, but let me recapitulate the proposition. The knowledge of the Adept Brothers is entitled to the immense respect I claim for it, because it has all the characteristics of a true science; that is to say,

it is the accumulated knowledge of a vast number of observers, reduced to order and generalised by a vast number of thinkers, and verified by a vast number of experimentalists. The instruments employed for the observations, and for the experiments, are the faculties developed in human creatures of a fine organisation by certain modes of life. The Bœotian herd that knows nothing of Nature but her outermost envelope, the mere physicists, whom a more enlightened generation will look back upon as an artist looks upon his frame-maker and colourman, deny that such faculties can be developed, or have ever existed. I need not argue the point in writing to such an audience as that I now address. In the society of London psychologists, there is certainly one gifted lady whose name will rise in every mind which these lines reach, who has found and walked in that "Perfect Way" which leads to the development of such faculties as I speak of. But to a nation where the records of astronomy had never penetrated, the science would not have been introduced by the sudden importation of a single telescope, however exquisite in its perfection and far-reaching in its power. The possessor of that telescope might begin to enunciate observations conflicting with some of the current ideas about the motions of the heavenly bodies, but would not be able to observe and calculate and verify enough to command assent. But I would ask your readers to consider for a moment what would probably be the condition of thought and belief in the Spiritual world of London 100 years hence, supposing there were suddenly to spring up amongst you 100 seers and seeresses, as gifted, devoted, and industrious as the lady of whom I speak; and if these, as they dropped off in the interim, were succeeded by others as well qualified to carry on the work as they. Is it not manifest that the observations of each and all would be compared, that the errors of the first observers would be eliminated, their just conclusions confirmed and used as *points d'appui* for irresistible inferences, which in their turn would suggest observation on new lines, and so on *ad infinitum*? At the end of my hypothetical century, is it not certain that the conclusions of Spiritual science, as thus reached, would dominate belief and conjecture on the subject, so that anyone who would put forward an idea picked up casually in the course of Spiritual observation, *without instruments* or special training, so to speak, would be looked upon as a person is looked on now who starts a new theory about the figure of the earth, or to the effect that the sun is only about the size of Greece after all?

Now the Occult World, of which I write, is in the position as regards Spiritual knowledge that I have imagined the psychologists of London to attain to ultimately, *only much more so*. It is not for 100 years, but for more centuries than I dare tell about, that the accumulation of its knowledge has continued, and its living observers are indeed what our short-sighted generation has been so undeservedly called, "the heirs of all the ages in the foremost files of time." And surely if that is so, there is no room for argument about the line of inquiry in regard to Spiritual things which at this moment it is best worth our while to undertake. There is nothing worth doing or talking about compared with taking advantage of such opportunities as may be afforded to us of learning such lessons as the real masters of Theosophic science may be willing to teach. As to the question whether this is so I will only ask any reasonable person to make a study of current Theosophic literature, including the books I have mentioned above, and some selected passages from the *Theosophist*, and then, if he did this, it would be incomprehensible to me that he should disbelieve. Occasionally, trying to break down the crass materialism of outer sceptics, I have lent them Zöllner's and Crookes' and Wallace's books on Spiritualism, and have found them still unconvinced, but in these cases all one can say is that the failure is not the fault of the books. So in the present case; if people can attentively read even the meagre literature which has gathered round the subject as yet, and remain unaffected by its evidence concerning the existence and knowledge of our Brothers,—all I can say is that I should not think that the fault of the evidence.

Now I am quite prepared for the objection which some readers may raise. It will be said, "If the Brothers are what you say, why don't they teach their knowledge in a more convincing and systematic manner?" But natural as this question may be at first, it is really on a level with that often asked by the outer sceptic, "What is the good of Spiritualism? Will it tell me who is going to win the Derby?"—i.e., the question applies an inapplicable standard of criticism to the position criticised. In the one case the inquirer will

ultimately find that Spiritualism leaves the Derby out of its calculations because it is engaged with more important things ; in the other that the Brothers are governed in their policy as regards teaching by motives derived from the plane of their own knowledge and not from that of ours. I do not profess that at this moment I am prepared to interpret these motives in a manner that will satisfy people who have never endeavoured, even in thought, to explore that higher plane I speak of ; and, meanwhile, I will not here attempt an incomplete interpretation. But surely we may set aside the question as to whether the Brothers are doing the best they might for mankind if we accept the position that their knowledge about spiritual matters is practically infinite as viewed from our standpoint, and that at any rate they are now willing to teach us *something*. Is not half a loaf better than no bread, and if a friend bequeath us a moderate legacy shall we refuse to accept it because it is not so large an amount as we had expected ? Let us take it ; even if we take it at first in an ungrateful spirit, grumbling that it is not more. Perhaps those who are the best inclined to be grateful for it, even though it be little, will be the first to understand that our friend was not careless of us when he made his will, but careful as well of some higher interests which our egotism had induced us for a moment to overlook.

Now, I believe that our Brothers are quite incapable of error when they make a plain statement about any phase of Spiritualism ; but I am quite sure also that on account of the vastness of the area of Spiritual phenomena we are apt to misunderstand their statements when they go beyond comparatively simple matters. In the "Fragments of Occult Truth," for example, there is no statement, as far as I am aware, that is erroneous, but as a survey of the whole position the fragments are incomplete, and are liable to misinterpretation. Thus I see in "LIGHT" an inquiry from Mr. A. F. Tindall as follows :— "I can understand that some physical manifestations may be classed under their (the Occultists') description, but do they mean that Spirits who shew themselves to be kind and good, and also possessed of great intellectual powers such as my guide, who communicates by impression, and whose form no clairvoyant has ever seen, is also a 'shell' ?"

The answer may be given as boldly as words can convey it : "Most assuredly not." Referring to the first numbers of the "Fragments" the reader will find it stated : "It must not for a moment be supposed that all we hear from these latter (from mediums) comes from elementaries,"—from those entities some of which have been described as shells. And then the writer goes on to explain that the highest kind of mediums may pass entirely under the dominion of their own highest or seventh principle, and thus soar into higher regions of inspiration than those which elementary "Spirits" are capable of penetrating. And in another passage it is also stated that after the regenerated Ego of a spiritually-minded human being departed from this earth has been born again into the World of Effects (intervening between this life and the next material incarnation) "*it can be visited in spirit by men,*" though it cannot, even if it would, descend into our grosser atmosphere. This statement embodies the answer to Mr. Tindall's question. Kind and good communications conveyed by subjective impression from intelligences shewing great intellectual powers are clearly of the kind obtained by the upward attraction of some perceptive emanations from the medium, and are not due to a descent of the purified Spirit into our grosser atmosphere. The absence of any consciousness on the medium's part, that some portion of himself is thus temporarily withdrawn, is nothing to the purpose. From physical science an analogy may be taken which shews how readily such processes may be misinterpreted. We talk habitually of buildings and trees being struck by lightning. But directly we wish to put the idea in a scientific shape, we have to recognise that the process which really takes place is a re-establishment of equilibrium between accumulations of electricity of opposite signs, one accumulation in the earth, the other in the clouds. It would probably be as true in most cases to say that the cloud was struck with (negative) electricity emanating from the earth, as to say that the earth has been struck by (positive) electricity emanating from the cloud. But the effect to the dweller on the earth is always that the earth has been struck.

Again, if the "Fragments" are attentively considered, it will be seen that there is no need to regard as probable the "dreadful" idea, that "a great part of mankind after death are wandering shells, soon to become extinct." The shell left behind is not the man, and no part of mankind wander the earth afterwards as shells. I am not contradicting a word in the "Fragments;" simply

explaining doctrines which, if my readers will look back to the "Fragments," will all be found there. That which takes place on the death of a human being has only to be remembered, and the position will be clear. The lower bodily principles having been done with and cast off, a struggle ensues between the higher ethereal principles. Some have still a natural affinity for the earth ; some a natural affinity for—what European readers will best realise if I call it Heaven. Now if the lower principles prove the stronger—*i.e.*, if the individual during life has almost entirely wedded himself to mere earthly desires, the Ego is drawn back to earth, and the spiritual principle, which cannot be destroyed, disengages itself from the Ego utterly and for ever, retaining no trace of contamination with the life it has been unable to purify. In such a case, "the man" certainly remains wandering about the earth after death, but he in this case is not a shell. He is worse than a shell in one way, though in another higher, in the sense of a more complex organism. But our teaching leads us happily to the conclusion that the result of the spirit-struggle described above is but rarely so disastrous as I have just imagined. In the enormous majority of cases the higher principles win the "tug of war," though it may be feared that, again in the enormous majority of cases, the spiritual victory is not so overwhelming and instantaneous that the Ego is directly carried up into "Heaven." But whether this supremely satisfactory result is accomplished, or whether the spiritual principle having drawn the Ego upwards, has still a long piece of work to do before that same Ego is fit for spiritual re-birth,—in either case equally, the lower principles of the ethereal group are cast off, and remain in the earth's attraction. These are the shells of which the "Fragments" speak. They are not the men who have gone away any more than the serpent's cast skin is the serpent, though this sometimes looks so like the serpent that I have known inexperienced people in this country stalk a skin with a double-barrelled shot gun and blow it to pieces before finding out their mistake. The confusion in the case of the shells arises from the fact that just as a certain perfume lingers for long around the "vase in which roses have once been distilled," so there is a reflection of the late individuality inhering in its shell. There is as nearly as possible no consciousness while the shell is left alone, but drawn within the current of mediumistic attraction the decaying principles, the cast skin of the ethereal man, are temporarily inflated by vitality drawn from the medium, and a spurious semblance of an individuality—which may quite likely profess itself that of the man to which it once belonged—is thus created.

For the moment, however, I will not dwell longer on this part of the subject, because enough has been said to saturate the Spiritual world with the belief that we Theosophists are always wanting to run down the character of their super-material experiences. Undoubtedly we have been set to do a great deal in that way, and probably for very good reasons—some of which I have very lately come into possession of, and will explain fully in the course of these letters. But at the same time there is no necessity to assail the character of that higher sort of Spiritualism which deals with the subjective impressions of an elevated and intellectual nature which mediums of appropriate faculties are capable of receiving. These are the Spiritual strokes of lightning, equivalent, as I have said, to the ascent of negative spirituality from the earth ; and, far from discountenancing the practices which may encourage such ascents, the one great aim and object of esoteric Theosophy is to encourage them. That is the kind of Spiritualism which the highest Theosophic Adepts constantly carry out. And the only difference, as regards this part of their science, between them and the best Spiritual medium is, that they know what they are about ; and are guarded by the possession of such knowledge, and the training that has accompanied its collection, from confusing the "communications" they may bring back from the higher spiritual regions, with those that may be too eagerly proffered to them by the tenants of what some mystics call the astral plane. Let a novice look through a badly made microscope, and he will mistake for peculiarities of the object he may be examining, the specks which are really in the eye-glass of the instrument. But the trained microscopist is not to be taken in. He too sees the specks, but he does not record them as belonging to his preparation.

What I propose to do in my next letter is to explain certain conditions of what may be loosely called life in the next world, which render some of the lower order of Spiritual manifestations dangerous in a way which I am quite sure no Spiritualist has ever thought of yet. We here are beginning now to understand

why the Brothers have been, as it has seemed, so hard on Spiritualism. It does not in the least degree ensue from ignorance on their part of the elevated character of some Spiritual experiences, but from a knowledge altogether strange to the ordinary world of some of the consequences which may ensue from the far more frequent Spiritual experiences of a lower order.

A. P. S.

"MISS WOOD'S MATERIALISATIONS."

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—In your last issue is a long letter from Mr. Frank Podmore, virtually doubting the integrity of the medium, and also the fact of materialisation.

Some sceptics feel very clever at arguing "pro or con.," and invariably put in a sentence or two such as—"In all this I have not sought to prove Miss Wood an impostor," &c. Allow me to say Mr. Podmore tries his best to make her so.

It is evident he is NOT POSTED UP, and cares nothing for the opinions of others, such as Mr. Varley, Mr. Crookes, F.R.S., Mr. T. P. Barkas, Mr. Mould, Dr. Nichols, and hosts of others I could name. In the *Spiritualist* newspaper, July 9th, 1880, I reported a séance of Miss Wood's held on June 3rd, 1880, at Newcastle, in the presence of Mr. Barkas and twenty others, to the satisfaction of all, when I found "Pocha" a living nigger figure, and not on her knees, but about three feet high, with short bow legs. She kissed me, not with a *cotton mouth*, and got on my back as I sat on the floor, as she would not let me lift her to *try her weight*, and proved that she was not on her knees at all. Again, in the same newspaper, April 18th, 1879, I reported a test of Miss Kate Cook as to materialisation. Three of the witnesses there mentioned Mr. Podmore can go and see any day in London, and interrogate them about that excellent séance.

If Mr. Podmore is mistaken about "Pocha," so he is likely to be about all forms of materialisation. If "Pocha" had a cotton mouth, it would only prove her not fully formed, for I have felt them sometimes clammy and unpleasant to kiss. I shall not enter into any controversy, as I have given up writing, having proved the facts for myself and many others.—Yours, &c.

CHARLES BLACKBURN.

Parkfield, Didsbury, near Manchester,
August 21st.

P.S.—No man has tested more and proved more to the world, through Messrs. Varley, Crookes, and others, of materialisation than myself, at great cost, for the last dozen years. Whatever may be the detection of occasional supposed imposture, it is our ignorance of the laws governing materialisations more than *any desire* of the mediums to *impose upon us*.

SIR,—Permit me to approach this subject—treated in a somewhat discursive manner by Mr. F. Podmore in your last issue—also in the character of an outsider, that is, one not familiar with the system of investigation usually employed at materialisation séances. I quite understand and appreciate your request that the discussion may be carried on in an impartial and impersonal manner, so I will endeavour to confine my criticisms of the letter above referred to to the position taken up and the arguments used by Mr. Podmore's "Our Sceptic." It may be as well that I should mention the fact of my forming one of the "twelve" who assisted at the sitting mentioned by Mr. Collingwood in such a manner as to cause Mr. Podmore to accuse him of an "*excess of missionary zeal*," &c. Mr. Podmore was seated on my left.

At the commencement of the sitting the secretary of the C.A.S., acting as manager or president, requested the sitters to join their little fingers with those of their neighbours on either side of them. This was mentioned as a necessary condition for the production of the phenomena we came to witness. I do not pretend to judge of the necessity of such proceeding, but as I came to obey any reasonable condition, I, with the majority of the sitters, did as we were requested. Mr. Podmore did not comply with this condition; thus whatever magnetic current may have been necessary to the intelligences who produce materialisations was broken by this wilful disconnection of the human chain forming the circle.

I leave it to your readers to judge whether, under such circumstances, and taking into consideration Mr. Podmore's own admission that he only made *hasty* observations, subsequently confirmed by *somewhat* fuller investigation during Miss Wood's absence, his position, or rather that of "Our Sceptic," is worth attacking. Still it may be just as well to point out some defects, and grave ones, in the report of the "somewhat

fuller investigation." I have no desire to bring any charges against Mr. Podmore personally. I know nothing against him, and have heard him highly spoken of, but this does not prevent my asking his "sceptical friend" to draw the line somewhere, and not accuse people who are probably just as observant, to say the least, as himself, of having been deceived into kissing and embracing a collection of muslin and fishing rods. There is really too much "cotton" about this business altogether. Mr. Podmore has omitted to inform your readers that the piping cord test was not selected by Miss Wood, but by some of the sitters, and that the coloured silk threads were used by the same sitters without Miss Wood knowing which junctions of cords were tied, with what kind of knot, or what was the colour of the silk. To believe that she could have untied the threads cut quite short, and leaving really nothing to take hold of; passed through and through the meshes of the net formed by the test; and finally tied up the angles of the meshes with the same coloured silk and in the same manner as the sitters had selected, and all this *in the dark*, the curtain completely shutting out the light from the closet in which she sat, is to give Miss Wood credit for being something more than a Himalayan Brother, and is too much even for common credulity to swallow. Permit me to be the "sceptic" in this instance. There are a mass of other discrepancies in the account of the séance—from my point of view at all events. I can only account for them by the argument that, in the same manner that a person looking through green spectacles sees a verdant tinge everywhere, so your correspondent must have looked through sceptical glasses with the inevitable result. The collapse into a heap of white drapery is a part of the fishing-rod argument; but how could the fishing-rod pierce the curtain and shew the "business" to perfection without the manipulator seeing the result of his or her operations? I noticed a peculiarity in these growings and shrinkings of the "respectable lay figure," and it was that the form of waist, shoulders, and general outline was just as proportionate in the small figures as the taller ones, without the "fishing-rods" having been withdrawn behind the curtain. Will "our sceptic" throw some light on this, and make his case a little more complete? May I also suggest his practising the operation and shewing us, when he has attained proficiency, what really can be done under the same circumstances which surround Miss Wood at her sittings? One such proof would be worth millions of theories.

Mr. Podmore says he took off a part of his attire and crawled through some of the meshes, but admits he left unfastened some of the angles of the meshes, and did the crawling in the daylight. This is sufficient to stamp such an investigation as valueless. I leave Mr. Blyton to admit or deny that he was satisfied that the cord was not appreciably altered in appearance by Mr. Podmore's passage through it. There were not merely "two or three threads" of coloured silk when Miss Wood sat, but about a dozen at least, scattered at random over the network. I do not think the conjuring part of Mr. Podmore's letter requires any particular reply, but presume his "sceptic" is thoroughly convinced that Miss Wood carries about on her fragile person from two to three tons of apparatus, and thus competes with Maskelyne and Cooke under similar conditions. Such sceptical credulity is really refreshing in these degenerate days. Permit me to conclude by saying that if it be mischievous to do as Mr. Collingwood has done, *i.e.*, publish results as he experienced them, it is equally mischievous to place before the public, as facts, deductions drawn from distorted perceptions.—Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM PAYNTER.

SIR,—As one who has frequently been present at the séances recently given by Miss Wood at the rooms of the C.A.S., would you kindly permit me to say a few words in reply to the somewhat curious letter of Mr. F. Podmore, which appears in the last issue of "LIGHT"? At the outset I propose to deal with Mr. Podmore only, and as he kindly admits me to be a witness neither partial nor credulous, he will, I trust, believe that I am not led away by prejudice when expressing an opinion that his letter is unjust. Beneath a specious veil of fairness in the assumed character of a sceptic—for his words can be interpreted, I venture to say, in no other way—Mr. Podmore accuses Miss Wood of deception, and denounces the sitters at her séances as well-meaning victims of a gross fraud. Now upon what grounds does he do so? He has been present at *one* séance given by Miss Wood, not several, as is the case with myself and others; and under far different conditions than those imposed upon that lady he has broken through, in his opinion, the network devised to prevent any possibility of fraud on the

part of the medium. To take the latter point first as by far the most important—Mr. Podmore undoubtedly succeeded in making an aperture in a similar network to that which enclosed Miss Wood, and thereby, according to his own view, proved that it was possible for Miss Wood to personate the Spirit forms supposed to be materialised through her mediumship. My own experience to a certain extent agrees with that of Mr. Podmore. I repeated his experiment, and found that it was possible by untying the silk threads which fastened the meshes of the lower portion of the network to produce an aperture of about fifteen inches by ten inches. By divesting myself of my boots, coat, and waistcoat, I succeeded in getting my head and arms through the opening, and had I been as slightly a built man as Mr. Podmore I have not the least doubt that it would have been possible for me to extricate myself completely from the enclosure. This, however, is, in my opinion, not the slightest proof of the *mala fides* of Miss Wood. I can, and have frequently, extricated myself from the most complicated rope-tying that human ingenuity could devise; but I would hesitate to say, in consequence, that the Davenports were tricksters. To return to Miss Wood. With difficulty Mr. Podmore and myself escaped from such an aperture in the netting as I have described. We were working in the light. Further, we did not return through the network and re-tie the silk threads, which, supposing his theory to be correct, Miss Wood must do. Mr. Podmore also will, if he repeats the experiment, find that it is next to impossible for him to wriggle backwards through the network. I say backwards advisedly, because unless the motion is retrograde, in the case of conceivable personation, the legs of the medium retiring would be distinctly visible, if in no other way, by the peculiar motion of the curtain. This is a point which must be obvious to the most inexperienced observer. According, then, to Mr. Podmore's hypothesis, Miss Wood must firstly run the risk of divesting herself of her outer clothing, for except by doing so it would be impossible for her to get through the network. She must then crawl through the very small opening described, and after her personations crawl backwards into the cabinet again. Nor is her task then over. She must re-tie the silken threads which have bound together the network, which are always found intact after her manifestations, and must do all this in *darkness* most complete and absolute. Further, in order to accomplish this feat, on the occasion of the second séance which was held by Miss Wood, she must have known by some extraordinary prescience that the interstices of the network were to be tied with silk thread as an additional test, and also have provided herself with silk of the same colour as that which happened by a mere accident to be used. As a matter of fact, this particular test was only applied as an after-thought, shortly before the opening of the séance, and the thread, which was hastily fetched, was of a peculiar colour not easily matched on an emergency. Mr. Podmore will no doubt reply that all these statements simply go to prove that Miss Wood is an unusually clever conjurer. Mr. Podmore has, however, other and more difficult things to account for. Supposing his theory to be correct, and that Miss Wood does, or rather *can*, personate the larger forms that Mr. Podmore and myself have seen materialised, how does he account for the child "Pocha"? It is true Mr. Podmore did not have the advantage that many have had of seeing this form at a considerable distance from the curtain. That form I have seen at least three feet from the curtain. I have felt the pressure of its small arms round my neck, the touch of its small face against mine. I have seen its small bare dark leg and foot. Its voice was distinct, close to my ear. Mr. Podmore suggests ventriloquism. If Mr. Podmore had much experience in ventriloquism he would know that clear light as well as an objective imago is essential to the carrying out successfully of ventriloquial deception. Mr. Podmore hints that "Pocha" is a skilful arrangement of drapery held by Miss Wood at the end of a *fishing rod*, previously concealed about her clothing. From a conjurer's point of view lazy tongs would be a more reasonable suggestion. Either idea, if fairly considered, fails to explain the phenomena which others and myself have witnessed, unless Miss Wood be a conjurer far more clever than even Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke. Whatever may be the explanation of the phenomena which have taken place at the séances, I protest emphatically against Mr. Podmore's letter. He judges from one experience, which, thanks to him, was imperfect. He inflicts a stigma on the character of a lady whom he admits to be honest and trustworthy, and he does so on the ground that coatless, waistcoatless, and bootless, he wriggled

through a small aperture in the network that had, on the occasion on which he saw the materialised forms given through Miss Wood, enclosed her. As a lawyer, accepting Mr. Podmore's hypothesis, I engage to say that if any honest jury were asked to pronounce a verdict on the evidence as to whether Miss Wood was or was not guilty of fraud they would unanimously acquit her.

T. G. P.

SIR,—Mr. Podmore's letter covers a large area, and cannot be disposed of in the short reply which, for lack of time, I am able to offer this week. I shall have more to say hereafter, but for the present I must be understood to demur to some of Mr. Podmore's conclusions, arrived at, as I believe, hastily and on insufficient investigation.

He knows nothing of the séance which I especially described: that was very different from the one at which he was present. Hence much that he says is beside the point. I should not have grounded any conclusion on such an opportunity as was afforded to Mr. Podmore. The results to which I bore testimony are not impugned by his generalization, and the only thing that I am disposed to agree with him in is that any phenomena obtained under such conditions are inevitably open to question. I agree with "M. A. (Oxon.)" that as near an approach to full light as is possible, is most desirable.

J. FRED. COLLINGWOOD

August 22nd.

[We have received other replies to Mr. Podmore's communication, but we regret to say that they are too "personal" in their character, and that therefore we are unable to give them insertion.—Ed. "LIGHT."]

THOUGHT-READING EXTRAORDINARY.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—The following details of the latest and most remarkable development of that form of Thought-reading popularised by Mr. Irving Bishop may prove of interest to your readers. In conjunction with Mr. G. A. Smith, a Brighton mesmerist, not unknown to readers of this and other Spiritualist journals, I have had the satisfaction of experiencing some demonstrations of mind-sympathy which are, I believe, almost without precedent. The *modus* of Mr. Smith's experiment is this: He places himself *en rapport* with myself by taking my hands; and a strong concentration of will and mental vision on my part has enabled him to read my thoughts with an accuracy that approaches the miraculous. Not only can he, with slight hesitation, read numbers, words, and even whole sentences which I alone have seen, but the sympathy between us has been developed to such a degree that he rarely fails to experience the taste of any liquid or solid I choose to imagine. He has named, described, or discovered small articles he has never seen, when they have been concealed by me in the most unusual places, and on two occasions he has successfully described portions of a scene which I either imagined or actually saw.

Mr. Smith has exhibited marked power as a thought-reader through the mediumship of other persons, but on no occasion has he attained to anything like the power he invariably displays when *en rapport* with myself. I may add that we have for some time been experimenting together with a view of developing one or the other, but until quite recently the results were not of a nature to call for special remark. The results at each sitting have so far shewn such a marked improvement that it may be safely assumed that ere long Mr. Smith will develop a sympathetic power equal to anything shewn by sensitives in the mesmeric or clairvoyant state. The experiments have created great interest in local scientific circles, and we propose giving a series of séances to the members of the Sussex Natural History and other scientific associations.

We shall be happy to receive a visit from any Spiritualist or scientific inquirer who may be at Brighton during the ensuing month, especially as we are about to inaugurate a series of private séances, at which this most interesting phase of psychic force may be investigated and developed.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

DOUGLAS BLACKBURN,

Brightonian Office,

Editor of the *Brightonian*.

24, Duke-street, Brighton.

The premises of the C. A. S., 38, Great Russell-street, will be closed for cleaning and repairs from August 26th to September 16th inclusive.

MR. J. J. MORSE'S APPOINTMENTS.—FALMOUTH: August 27th; BRISTOL: August 30th; BATH: August 31st; GATESHEAD: September 10th and 11th.—For terms and dates, direct Mr. Morse, at 53, Sigdon-road, Dalston, London, E.—[Adv.]