

Light:

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"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!" *Goethe.*

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

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

It has been raining very hard of late, and, as a sad consequence, agricultural interests have suffered. The Bishop of St. Albans has been moved, very properly from his point of view, to request his people to join in prayer that the "plague of rain and waters" may cease. There will be difference of opinion as to the effect of these well-intentioned prayers, but none as to the spirit which prompts them. A slender acquaintance with, and recognition of, the action of natural law is not incompatible with a pious desire to remove a cause of national distress. But the Bishop's arguments are the odd part of his utterance. "We cannot doubt," his lordship says, "that our sins have brought these sorrows and distresses upon us. We thought vainly a few years since that we could double the productiveness of the earth by our skill and contrivance. We had become vain in our imaginations, and our foolish heart was darkened. We forgot—indeed, many among us do openly deny—that it was He, the Living God, who gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness. So He hath withdrawn from us the fertilising warmth of sunshine and hath sent upon us a plague of immoderate rain and waters. . . . I trust that all godly people will entreat the Lord while He may be found." Now what would be thought of such an argument as this if applied to ordinary events? We have done all we can, says the Bishop, to increase the productiveness of our land. Patent manures, and high farming have done this; surely a beneficent work! But no! we meddled with the special work of God, and He has revenged Himself by all this rain. Let us abandon our steam ploughs, and our patent manures (why not our spades, and bush-harrows too?), and revert to the principles of the primitive savage, and his medicine man! It is hard not to smile, it is impossible not to marvel, at this latest episcopal utterance. How hard must it be for minds, so constituted and trained, to receive ideas which would brush away all that crude conception of God and His dealings, of nature and her laws, as a broom sweeps a cobweb from some dark corner into which daylight has not penetrated! Our intelligent attempts to make the best of our land have provoked God, as the Babel architects once before provoked Him, and He has, *therefore*, rained on us, to shew us that we ought to have sat still and left the land alone. And so we are to stop and pray to Him "while He may be found," for, apparently, there is a time when the rain must go on in spite of us, and then we shall be drowned. Alas! alas! a strange study of Divine methods and human duty!

W. Emmette Coleman, whose writings are always thoughtful and suggestive, contributes to the *Index* (Boston U.S.A.) a review of a series of discourses on "The

Gospel of Law," by S. J. Stewart, of Boston. The Bishop of St. Albans would, I fear, regard Mr. Coleman as one who imports a dangerous amount of mere human common sense into his religion. He is an apostle of progress, of development, and of growth. He thinks that the "last fifty years mark an important epoch in the world's religious development," chiefly on account of the application of the scientific method in "determining the genesis, growth, and decadence of the theological faiths of humanity." He speaks of comparative theology as "a sister science to comparative mythology, and comparative philology"; and—but I forbear! The essay is excellent, and will bear both perusal and elaboration. Many of its points are extremely suggestive; and the writer makes a manly protest against the crude and ignorant and often coarse and blasphemous nonsense which issues from the infidel press. Such crudities influence no one, except perhaps to repel him. But such works as that under review are well calculated to present truth in a simple garb, and to assail with effect such sophistries as those of the good Bishop of St. Albans.

Another shock to the episcopal views! "What is Religion?"* is a pamphlet of the kind that Mr. Coleman desiderates. It is an outspoken but by no means irreverent or offensive vindication of freedom of thought in reference even to the most sacred subjects. The tenor of the writer's arguments may be gathered from one of his conclusions. "Speaking generally, our highest good consists in that healthy and harmonious development of the intellectual, moral, and physical faculties which best fits us for the duties and enjoyments of life." This life, he contends, is a life of action and of energy, and the man who is "up and doing, with a heart for any fate," cultivating his own spiritual and physical gifts, benefiting his fellows, adding to the store of human happiness and knowledge, is more to be commended than "those highly praised agnostic thinkers, who look back to 'those things which are behind,' instead of 'reaching forward to those things which are before,' and who cast, wistfully regretful glances on what they deem 'a creed outworn,' instead of filling eyes and heart with the glory of ascertained truth." There has always seemed to me a lack of robustness in much of the religious thought of the age, which is not inconsistent with its rather formless and gelatinous aestheticism in art, and its dilettante dawdling and half-hearted dabbling in things that need other and more vigorous treatment. Sad and sorrowful retrospect is rather the note of an age that loves its sage greens and Whistler yellows, and that can with difficulty brace itself up to a sustained interest in anything. C.N.'s views of religion may act as a useful tonic to the younger dawdlers of this type for whom life is already too terrible, and who see its hollowness and emptiness all around them, the saddening reflection of their own inward spirit. If they can exorcise that spirit they will find the truth of the Berkleyan maxim, that the external universe is but the reflection of our own mental state: and such thoughts as C.N.'s, if they can only nerve themselves to read them, may lead to higher and nobler views of life and duty.

"Are supernatural matters worthy of scientific research?" is a question that has been vexing the Penzance Debating

* "What is Religion?" By C.N., Annotated by Dr. R. Lewis, London: W. Stewart and Co.

Society. The Rev. W. Lach-Szyrma, vicar of Newlyn, thinks they are. One Mr. Doble thinks not, for reasons which he was rash enough to give:—"First, on the ground that scientific laws excluded a whole order of these phenomena simply by the nature of things—that the phenomena were found in flat contradiction to scientific laws, and must, therefore, be rejected; and secondly, on the ground that the rest of the phenomena—whether they were true or not did not matter—belonged to the sphere of the human mind, and the human mind was altogether beyond the pale of scientific examination." Another gentleman produced "The Confessions of a Medium"; some statements in which his intelligence caused him at once to "stamp as a lie." Then the Northumberland House Lion, and its wagging tail, a venerable jest, was once more trotted out; and some very foolish stories appear to have been told. In the end, *Psychical Research* triumphed by more than two to one; and the London Society may consider that it has Western sanction on its work. Perhaps the Penzance Debating Society is limited to talk, and it is hard to blame it for fulfilling its mission. But can it not set to work as the London Dialectical Society did, and collect *facts*, if only to shew Mr. Doble that his ideas about scientific laws, and his knowledge of their action, are susceptible of improvement? No amount of talk will touch him, but a few facts might possibly set him thinking and change the current of his ideas.

Dr. Bell's is a quaint old book,* interesting in the extreme to those who desire to look back from the experiments of to-day to times long past, when similar investigations were being made. There is nothing new under the sun, and here we have an experiment which, when Slade made it, was thought to be new. He influenced a magnet by making passes over the glass which shut it in its case. Others have since done the same. Here, however, we have a record which shews that the thing was done nearly a century ago. "Mrs. H., an Irish lady, in London, did, in 1786, before many ladies and gentlemen, move the needle of the compass by approaching her thumb to it."

Nor is thought-transference a new thing. In the same book I find a case of some ladies and gentlemen who had agreed to fix their minds on some subject, and who then went to a somnambule, and asked her what they had thought? "She said she had answered them in their own language (*i.e.*, mentally), it was a pity they did not understand her: but she asked for a pen and ink, and *wrote what they had thought*. This phenomenon is very common." "Of this (says quaint old Dr. Bell) we must content ourselves with admiring the wonderful effects of nature: that condition, which Providence seems to present to the learned in order to confound them, and shew the narrow compass of human understanding!"

Again, the luminous appearance presented to the clairvoyant by magnets and magnetised objects, as well as by the hands of the mesmeriser, was observed by the same Dr. Bell. He says, "In Dublin I put a nobleman asleep before several of his friends. After he was awake we caused the room to be made dark. I shewed him a glass conductor (previously magnetised) which to him appeared very luminous, like an electric spiral tube. *He also saw my hand all luminous*. I rubbed the nose of a gentleman present, which he saw luminous! I also rubbed one of his fingers from the basis to the end, which he distinguished from the rest by its luminous appearance. *These experiments never fail; as has been proved by many.*" Various other instances are given. Dr. Bell believed that sensitives in a dark room not only saw "sparks of fire issuing out of the

fingers, but also a luminous vapour flying all around the body (of the mesmeriser) like phosphorus." This is that luminous vapour which so many observers see at dark séances, which was successfully photographed by Mr. Beattie, at Clifton, which probably is the material of the invisible forms photographed by Hudson, Mumler, and others, and which is finally solidified into the "materialised form," respecting which we hear and see so much and know so little. At the time when I was a regular attendant at séances, I could not only see this luminous cloud reaching from the table to the ceiling, but could by its movements, and by the motion of similar floating masses outside the circle, tell in what direction some manifestation—audible or visible, or palpable to some sense—might be expected.

I have received a copy of "A book written by the spirits of the so-called dead with their own materialised hands by the process of independent slate-writing: Compiled by C. G. Helleberg, Cincinnati, 1883." It is hard to treat seriously the communications contained in this volume. The method by which they were given places them in the category of communications given abnormally by spirits, for they were, it is stated, obtained within closed slates by the process of psychography, or independent writing. But when we come to consider what manner of spirits they can be who can have indited these messages, it must be confessed that the opinion of the Swedenborgian Minister on some that are subscribed by the name of Swedenborg is much to the point. "I have no doubt in the world" (writes the Rev. John Goddard, acknowledging Mr. Helleberg's letter) "that there is such a thing as communication with spirits . . . nor have I any doubt whatever that they are a very low order of spirits, and scarcely ever those whom they personate. It is clear that Swedenborg never sent any such communications as these. To believe otherwise would be to believe that intelligent men in the other world lose their wits instead of increasing in wisdom." Beside the Swedenborg messages—an outrage on a great man's name—much of the book is taken up with an account of a wedding in spirit-life, with minute descriptions of the dress of bride and bridegroom, and their various attendants. It is gravely printed that "our son Emil, the bridegroom, had knee-breeches of royal purple, with a beautiful white toga frosted with gold, and gold tassels and a purple and gold crown set with diamonds!" The honeymoon was spent in Mars, where the wedding party arrived in time to see "a party of excursionists on a visit to our planet earth!" There is no evidence that the book is an elaborate joke. Indeed the photograph of the author shews a face of mild and simple enthusiasm which speaks volumes for his credulity, but does not lead us to put much faith in his power of seeing a joke. A very small sense of the ludicrous should have protected him from making of Spiritualism and his own faith a mere laughing-stock. Not the least regrettable fact in connection with Spiritualism is the mass of literature that issues from the press, calculated only to bring ridicule and contempt on a truth that has suffered many things from many men, but most of all from its too credulous and enthusiastic devotees.

M.A. (Oxon.)

THE CURE OF DIABETES.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—I beg through you to thank Dr. Wyld and M. Adolphe Didier for their kind attention to my question concerning diabetes. I have also to acknowledge the receipt of a card sent through you from Paris.

I am glad to find that the disease in question is, as I expected to find, to some considerable extent amenable to *vital treatment*.

In return for Dr. Wyld's courtesy, I may remark that I have found that wonderful drug, the salicylate of soda, useful in the case referred to. In conclusion, I must express my individual satisfaction at the tone of the "Notes" by "M.A. (Oxon.)" on the subject of vital treatment, which meet the facts of so many cases in a way to which no medical man who loves the truth need object.—I remain, sir, your obedient servant,
3rd March, 1883.

J. E. P.

* "The General and Particular Principles of Animal Electricity and Magnetism." By Monsieur le Docteur Bell. Printed for the Author, 1792.

"ATTEMPTS AT TRUTH."*

By St. George Stock.

(Continued.)

Mr. Stock rests the claim of Spiritualism to be regarded as a religion upon the fact that it has established a belief concerning man's future after physical death by direct evidence from "the other side." Now on this it must be remarked that Spiritualism does not herein supersede or conflict with the old religion, as Mr. Stock seems to suppose, for the reason, strange as it may sound at first, that the old religion gives us no information whatever on the subject. Christianity, like the higher Buddhism, concerns itself exclusively with the conditions of the Divine or regenerate life—salvation. It is the fact that there is not in it, as there is in Buddhism, a lower or supplementary doctrine of the future life—as the mere natural sequence of the present—and that as to this the Gospels and Church traditions contain no distinct intimations, that has led to the preposterous error which Mr. Stock adverts to as if it belonged to the religion itself. The doctrine of the Divine, or blessed, life has been mistaken for a doctrine of the future life. And so our present little life had to be regarded as the critical moment of eternity for each of us, and all mankind had to be divided, just as they happened to be at death, into two great classes of the saved and the damned. Mr. Stock thus illustrates the ludicrous consequence. "Let us suppose, for instance, that Mrs. Brown is dead. What becomes of her soul? Here below she was an honest old creature enough. She had her faults, of course, and was horridly vulgar, and, withal, intensely unspiritual. Is she to effloresce at once into a spotless angel? It is the only supposition our feelings will admit." Brahminism and Buddhism make provision for Mrs. Brown, or at all events for Mrs. Brown's Karma; but Christianity makes none. It is an extraordinary omission, perhaps; but not more extraordinary than the fact, to which Mr. Stock refers, that Judaism, during all its earlier history, had a doctrine of God without any doctrine of immortality whatever. There have been plenty of speculations in the Church about the "intermediate state," but they are speculations only, and have never crystallised into dogma. Now the idea that we are to go on living, or are to live again and again, does not belong to religion unless it results from, and is part of, a spiritual science revealing the whole truth about man, and shewing wherein the principle of his immortality consists. Such a doctrine is necessarily religious, because it establishes the dictates of conscience and of the holiest aspirations as conditions of our own essential and eternal well-being. It thus supplies the sanction which the moral philosopher of either school fails to demonstrate. But the evidence of Spiritualism at its best falls far short of such a science. Mr. Stock himself declares in the admirable essay entitled, "Materialism and Modern Spiritualism," that "the dispute between materialists and their antagonists would not be in the least decided by the triumph of modern Spiritualism." "We may well conceive spirits maintaining that the disintegration of their spirit-bodies would result in annihilation." "The materialist in our present world looks without him, and denies the existence of what others find within; and precisely the same dispute may arise on every successive plane of existence." In fact, modern Spiritualism, apart from inspirational utterances which have no evidential authority, is simply a proof of life under other corporal conditions. "The doctrine of a spirit-body—of a quasi-material envelope underlying the physical organism, and serving as the vehicle or garb of the spirit on decay of its old covering, is the great contribution of modern Spiritualism to philosophy." And though it is absurd to suppose that scientific materialism as taught in this world and in this age can survive the shock of such a proof, it is quite true that the root of the controversy is not really touched by it. Mr. Roden Noel has also been at some pains to make this evident. But religion is the doctrine of immortality, the way of release from all precarious conditions of life. Mr. Stock supplements the claim of "Spiritualism"—a misnomer we have always used reluctantly—by its recognition of moral continuity in the life hereafter, its great gospel, "birth into another sphere of existence, a sphere in which every human being is exactly that which himself and society have made him, and where his worth is measured solely by what he can bring with him beyond the tomb." But directly we have got rid of the confusion between the regenerate life and the future life, and of the supposition that Christianity is a doctrine of the latter, that idea follows as a matter of course. It does not belong to the proof, but to the very conception of a con-

tinued individual existence in which the identity is not assumed into a higher principle. John Stuart Mill put it forward as the only rational hypothesis. It belongs specially to Spiritualism because Spiritualists are the only people in the West (with the exception of a philosopher here and there) who stand between misconceived Christianity and the physical materialists. If our clergy understood their own faith, if they were not, as a rule, as ignorant of it as the congregations committed to their charge, instead of denouncing Spiritualism as a hostile power, they would define and explain its useful but subordinate function, and thus prevent pretensions which alone can make it an offence to religion. Not all Mr. Stock's eloquence—and he is sometimes very eloquent—on the magnificent prospect of moral development through the spheres of existence can discover to us the guarantee of that development, the "Power, not ourselves, that makes for Righteousness," the immanent principle of Divinity in the universe, which, logic notwithstanding, men must and will call God. The "new religion" will not do. Says an acute judge of speculative tendencies,* "the good Germans try very hard to be atheists, but they never succeed." And Mr. Stock's conscientious attempts in the same direction seem equally to fail. For does he not expressly recognise that "the real question at issue is not merely between matter, as we now understand that term, and spirit, but between the outer and the inner, between the mere external organism, whether physical or psychical, and a something unorganised, inaccessible, unknown, the spark of Deity within us, the breath of the most High God"? That is the eternal problem with which religion has to deal practically, as philosophy has to deal with it speculatively. Religion is sometimes superficially relegated to the emotional nature of man, as philosophy to his intellect. The true relation is that of Will to Thought. Religion is being, or coming to be, of that which philosophy can discern only in idea. But the will imposes on the understanding a task which the latter in vain endeavours or affects to disclaim. By its means, Religion makes religions. The Sphinx will have her riddle read. And since the spirit of a belief sinks deeply into its form, and becomes materialised therein, every process of re-solution has to encounter the charge of atheism, just as the loss of the body seems death to those who have no faith in life. The Absolute, it is true, will not be denied in favour of any concrete personality. Not, therefore, is it a barren abstraction, but the principle which in conscious manifestation, appears as love and reason, the life of all that lives. "The living and active moral order is God," says Fichte, "we need no other God, and can comprehend no other." "If it is believed that we must, in addition to the above order, think of a personal being, by whom this law was given, this order administered, still in this personal essence we must again presuppose that order, as willing, mode of action, holy power, or under any other abstract notion, and so this last would remain always the First and Highest, the Absolute, as sought and presupposed."† But as observed in our former article, the personal God which we can no longer identify as Absolute Being and First Principle, may survive for us as First Manifestation, the Logos, and also as First Distributer, the Holy Spirit. The First Cause alone, the Father, remains for ever hidden in the inscrutable mystery of being. Enough for us that His existence is necessary manifestation, restoring to us all that for the moment we seemed to lose. And so, after all the logical torment of the understanding, the still small voice of religion is heard again, re-instating her adoring formula, "the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity." But of the source and principle of our own life, and will, and reason, that microcosmic trinity in unity, "modern Spiritualism" can discover to us nothing. Be its message of conscious, personal survival ever so true, it offers no satisfaction to the highest aspirations of the soul, and is thus altogether destitute of a religious character. Nevertheless, we would not underrate what Mr. Stock well calls "the importance of the facts of Spiritualism in the science of religion," little as these can in themselves amount to such a science. The proof of inspiration, of the possibility, therefore, of revelations of truth from beings more enlightened than ourselves, is of immense value in this respect. So, also, the light thus thrown on the question of prayer, and "Special Providences." The "miracle" question,

* Dr. Stirling, "Secret of Hegel."

† This latter passage is not cited in Fichte's own words, but from an excellent summary of his philosophy in Tulk's translation of Chalybaeus's "Historical Survey of Speculative Philosophy from Kant to Hegel" (Loughman's, 1854), a book very little known now, but quite equal in merit to Schwegler's more celebrated work.

again, seems pretty well settled by this modern experience. In "The Bearings of Spiritualism," Mr. Stock brings into the compass of a few pages considerations with which every Spiritualist should be familiar who would be ready with a defence against ignorant prejudices and misconceptions. To the author, the triumph of Spiritualism seems assured, but as to its phenomenal future, he offers us three very suggestive alternatives. "It has allied itself with certain advanced opinions, and with a high conception of human life. Perchance it will succeed in establishing these on a popular basis, the perturbation of natural laws by those powers which it has fostered into abnormal activity being destined then to cease. Or, perchance these powers, now that they have been so largely called into play, will not again be remitted, but become henceforward the heritage of our race. Perchance again the lamp is already lit, which is to guide the feet of humanity through a dark era yet to come." We would suggest a fourth view, which is that modern conditions of publicity are favourable to the contagious development of influences which have been always in operation, and that suitable temperaments have more opportunities than heretofore. In one of Mr. Epes Sargent's works there is a probable theory that the great witch persecutions nearly stamped out for several generations the hereditary germs of mediumship, now recovering their natural rate of propagation. It would be rash to assume a great spiritual design in these manifestations until all such possibilities have been duly weighed.

In a future article, attention may be called to the other essays in this volume, which are excellent specimens of philosophical criticism. We take leave of Mr. Stock for the present, not only with considerable admiration for the author, but also with feelings of personal esteem for the man who commits literary reputation and intellectual position to vindication of truth, so unpopular, so misunderstood, and so calumniated as is Spiritualism. If too much is now claimed for it, that is rather the fault of those who have denied it legitimate recognition.

C. C. M.

GENERAL GHOST-OLGY.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—A short time since you kindly recorded phenomena witnessed by my friend Mr. W., of Old Catton, Norwich. In the course of further conversation with him he told me the following incident. In the house in which he now lives a gentleman was born, who continued to reside in it until it was taken by the family of my friend. This gentleman (whom we will call Smith) made one or two calls at the house subsequently, but although known to my friend was not intimate with him—and ultimately he passed out of sight altogether. About three years ago my friend was retiring to rest, and upon putting out his lamp, found his bedroom filled with a subdued light, and seated on a chair in the room appeared the figure of Mr. Smith, looking very pale and distressed. Mr. W. addressed the apparition, which replied, "William Edward Smith is in trouble," and gradually faded from view. What the trouble was my friend has of course never been able to gather.

One seems to be constantly coming across cases of a similar character. Reading to a friend, a few weeks since, one or two of the articles in "LIGHT," he told me the following story. On the night of July 5th, 1865, as my friend's father and mother were retiring to rest they heard three distinct sobs or moans as of a person dying. A light was obtained, and the room and passage were thoroughly searched—of course with no result. No sooner had the light been again put out than the sobs were again distinctly heard. This time the hour was noted, 10.50, my friend's mother remarking that she believed it meant that her brother was dead. The next post brought the news that her brother, David McKenzie Annison, had died at Chatham Hospital, July 5th, 1865, at 10.50 p.m. Several members of the family had been sailors, and in the case of two, who had been drowned, apparitions at the moment of death had been witnessed, on both occasions accompanied by a distinct sound of the straining of cordage and sail gear.

To-day, while looking through a most interesting old volume, "Cosmographica Universales," published at Basle, 1559, and profusely illustrated, I came across a picture of some mining operations in Germany, and in one part of the picture was a figure holding a forked divining rod, over which were the words "Virgula Divina."

Norwich.

G. A. KING.

PERSONALITY AND THE UNIVERSAL MIND.

By John E. Purdon, M.B.T.C.D.

(Continued from page 93.)

It seems pretty evident that if we consent to surrender the Personality of God, any attempt to retain Him as a Being to be loved, worshipped, and obeyed must end in simple fetichism, the idol becoming one of the imagination, if no longer of the senses, since the being who can commune with our own soul through similarity of nature and constitution is absent in either case; a test so radical as to need no further remark. The Personality of man is therefore the central starting-point of the matured religious instinct, when it has passed from what Cousin would call the chronological into the logical stage. It is easy for the positivist philosopher to say that we are now in his stage, that of the search for law, and the relegation of causes, including God Himself, to the limbo of evaporated absurdities. We want no other intuitive knowledge of Cause than that which comes with our knowledge of Self -- with the simple healthy Will which is the invariable accompaniment of a healthy body. If the positivist or materialist philosopher states that *he* does not lift his arm, but that the sum of the forces of the universe at that instant have such a resultant, he is playing with words and trifling with a serious subject; but if he pretends not to understand what is meant by the Will being the expression of a self-acting cause, it will be necessary to descend to first principles and ask him how many men were engaged in the movement of his arm, and if he says he does not know, he is by his own definition a pathological specimen to be studied, or an object of physical research, likely to furnish valuable information of a purely biological, though no longer of a reliable metaphysical, character. If, however, he acknowledges that but one man was so engaged, since the arm forms part of but one body, he may be informed that he understands just as much about *person* as any living man, and that the subjective side of that one body, known by him alone to be one, furnishes him with a proximate knowledge of the fact of personality, a knowledge which forms a sufficiently broad basis for the construction of a consistent theory of spiritual causes.

It is quite true the individual man can never get outside the radius of his sphere of personality; in fact, such a supposition would involve an absurdity, since we make the term "man" to correspond with person, and not with body, which latter, taken alone, exists merely in the region of appearances, and is in itself a fact that lies no deeper than the sense surface in which it is contained; for it is in fact no more than a passive agent of expression or term to convey an idea in the language of the senses, when inspired with living force from within. But while we limit personality and its subject in reciprocal bonds we do no more than present it, body and soul, under the form of directed quantity; for we do not fix the limits of its sphere, but permit it to change its radius, and this we do for the purpose of using, after the manner of analogy, established physical principles to supply us with fruitful ideas and save us from roundabout and confusing verbiage.

If after the analogy of natural actions we define Personality as the whole of God's work to a given end, the science of quantity will supply us with the means of understanding how, from the same elemental constitution, different results may be produced, or modifications of the final expression introduced by variation of the order and position of the constituents in the fixed form of arrangement. But the completed conception of a personality expressing itself through an organism necessarily involving the due estimation of all breaches of continuity in the empirical consciousness of that organism, it can only be to the looker-on that a breach takes place in the personality when the organism becomes the property of an invading spirit or assertive personality different from the proper owner and responsible ruler. We may, therefore, say with truth that, as regards the body considered as *quantum*, a mere formal change in the arrangement of parts may be quite sufficient to produce for us, the observers, an apparently radical change, equivalent to the possession of the body and displacement of the personality by a departed spirit. Whereas, for all we can say to the contrary, the manifestations of possession may be no more than the modified linguistic (in a generalised sense) expression, in accordance with modified possibilities of realisation of the thoughts passing between intelligent beings, *i.e.*, the true possessor of the body and others subsumed under his unmodified personality in some inscrutable manner, the personality of the individual

being as necessary a factor of interpretation as the life of the body; the appearance of possession not at all depending upon the expulsion of the owner, but upon his enchainment under imposed conditions.

This view gets over the tremendous difficulty of having to account for what becomes of the Personality when the body of the medium or possessed individual is, somehow or other, from physical peculiarities of that body, placed at the service of other spirits (to adopt the simplest hypothesis), since it employs the life and personality together to explain how communication may be established between the inhabitants of this world and the world of spirits. There is here no breach of continuity against which thought revolts, as there would be if the owner's spirit left the body and another foreign spirit took possession of it; the revolt not being against a world of spirits or other worlds, but against foolish ways of talking about them. The reader must be cautious not to impute to me the opinion that the person of the medium or possessed is morally answerable for the detailed effects of the possession, which to me is but *translation*; though I do hold that he is responsible when he voluntarily puts himself in danger.

Newton pointed out how the Infinite Being might feel all things and will all things through the means of "His boundless uniform sensorium," to which no localising organs are adjusted since they are not required; and similarly it seems to me that the Almighty may include in His boundless undifferentiated Personality all those souls which are His creatures and subordinate to Him, but which added up for ever could never constitute Him, since He is not *quantum*; a form relative to the constitution of the human intellect alone. The problem of our relation to God as organised beings naturally suggests the consideration of God as Himself organised, that is to say, as manifesting His Will and directing the Universe. It is, therefore, in establishing an identity between the forms of vital and cosmical existence that man can recognise himself as the being possessed of a double nature, related to his Creator upon the one side and to the lower order of existence on the other. Our business is to justify the attitude which embraces this belief at a glance and in one single thought, a part of ourselves, with vital relationship between its several elements; and to substitute it for the laboured system of surface relationships, which are sufficient to some minds to prove the stability and oneness of the universe to depend upon inanimate forces alone, with perhaps a vague hope of something else which they cannot understand and which they call the Unknowable.

The Personality of God with me will, therefore, mean the oneness of God after the manner of the oneness of a man, and the organism of God will mean the oneness of the universe after the analogy of the oneness of the organism which manifests the will and nature of a man. We believe in the Wisdom and Love of God; we must also believe in their union in Use, which is distinctly human, and a Subject which we can analyse by the methods appropriate to the human intelligence and which have proved themselves to be so powerful in extracting the arcana in other departments of natural knowledge.

(To be continued.)

A REVEREND "THOUGHT READER."—The Rev. E. H. Sugden has been exhibiting his powers as a "thought reader" before a large audience at Bradford, after the fashion of Mr. Irving Bishop and Mr. Stuart Cumberland. Having been blind-folded in another room, he returned to the hall where certain objects had been hidden in his absence, and taking the hand of the hider he found the secreted articles in most cases without much difficulty. In the same way he successfully followed a chalk track that had been drawn on the floor; and correctly indicated the number of a bank-note. At the conclusion of his experiments, the rev. gentleman said the whole secret of the affair was that the thought-reader obtained a direction in space from the person whose hand he held. He followed the line of least resistance in every instance. It was necessary to push the hand of the medium first one way and then another to discover this direction, but the mind so worked upon the muscles as almost inevitably to give the required indication. The whole thing was done in the purest unconsciousness. He selected the medium's left hand in preference to the right because that hand was the most automatic.—If the rev. gentleman's object was simply to shew that Mr. Irving Bishop's "thought-reading" is nothing better than a trick, we are content to leave him and Mr. Irving Bishop to settle the matter between them. If his purpose was to suggest that *all* thought-reading is of the same character, he had better place himself at once at the feet of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, from whom he may learn something that will enlighten and surprise him.

WAS IT SPIRITS?

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—In your issue of November 11th, 1882, there was published a letter signed "Inquirer" respecting some untruthful communications which the writer had received from his spirit-guides respecting some young men who went to America; and, as I have something to say on the subject, you will, perhaps, permit me to re-publish the annexed extract from the letter in question:—

"Two young men in whom I was interested went to America. Nothing had been heard of them for a long time. My spirit friends, however, told me all about them. One had been killed by Indians in the Far West; the survivor went with a Robert Gordon to Australia, where both were very prosperous. Gordon, I was informed, was a native of a town in the North of Scotland, and I was favoured with his father's address and occupation. I wrote to him, and my letter was returned—'Not known.' I then applied to a bank agent on whom I could rely; but with the same result. About seven months afterwards one of the young men wrote they were both well; and it was ascertained that they had not left America, and had never heard of Robert Gordon. Four families whom I had induced to become Spiritualists were so disgusted with this imposition, as well as others, that they renounced Spiritualism as the work of the devil, and are its most bitter opponents. It appears to me that very little reliance can be placed on the truth of spirit messengers; but, notwithstanding the deceit practised upon us, we know that there is a life beyond the grave; but where it is, what it is, and indeed, of almost everything relating to it, we are in the most profound ignorance."

Now, sir, I doubt if spirits out of the body had anything to do with such a communication. I am rather of opinion that the false information proceeded from the mind of the unconscious medium; or, if it did come from disembodied spirits, that the channel of communication was so imperfect as to be utterly misleading. I do not see, however, because false information was given about the young men in America by the communicants in or out of the body, why some four families whom the writer had induced to become Spiritualists should renounce it and regard it "as the work of the devil." Surely such persons could not have made themselves acquainted with the facts and philosophy of Spiritualism before becoming converts to it, or they could not possibly have been so easily turned against it.

Whatever was the source of the intelligence from which "Inquirer" derived his information, it was plain that it either could not give correct information, or by some means was prevented from doing so. It may, however, surprise and interest "Inquirer" to know that a portion of the communication was correct. The reference to Robert Gordon, at least, was so. There was such a person as Robert Gordon, who belonged to the North of Scotland, and did proceed to Australia. This man is personally known to me, and lived with his wife and young son here in Sandhurst. He is at present in Melbourne, and is a printer by trade, and his wife and child still live here. Gordon's father was named John Gordon, and lived at Banff, and was justice of the peace there; but emigrated to Australia in June, 1850. He died in New South Wales on the 17th August, 1855. His son, Robert, paid a visit to his relations in the North of Scotland in 1877, returning to Australia again in January, 1880, by the Northumberland. These are facts for which I can vouch, being thoroughly conversant with them. So "Inquirer" will perceive that from whatever source the communication came, the Robert Gordon referred to in it was no myth. I may add that his grandfather's name was Robert Gordon, and that he lived at a place in the North of Scotland called Croughly. My unknown friend will also perceive why Robert's father was unknown at the address given, having been absent from it for so many years.

I am a Spiritualist who does not believe in every communication received from entranced mediums coming from spirits. I think it very probable spirits out of the body have nothing to do with many of them. And if the mediums through whom some of these come are not test mediums for such messages, ten to one but that what is so received will prove, on being put to the test, unreliable.

There is no evidence, however, to prove that spirits out of the body are responsible for such deceiving messages; and until we know more of the laws controlling such communication, we should not rashly sit in judgment or jump at conclusions which a greater knowledge of these occult forces of nature might prove to be erroneous.

With compliments to your correspondent and yourself,—I am, dear sir, yours most respectfully,
W. D. C. DENOVAN.
Sandhurst, Victoria, Australia, Jan 16th, 1883.

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.

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

A HAUNTED HOUSE.

The following narrative of personal experiences in a haunted house has been contributed by a clergyman, who may be confidently relied upon for the strict accuracy of his interesting record. He does not wish his name to be made public, but he has kindly consented that it should be given to any inquirer who is seriously interested in the investigation of occurrences of the character described.

I have been asked to furnish some account of my experiences in a haunted house, which occurred some twenty years ago.

My father was a private schoolmaster, and in my tenth year his school outgrew the accommodation which the house we then lived in afforded. A friend, who was the non-resident lessee of a large, commodious house, some eight miles away, made him an offer of this dwelling, capable of accommodating nearly sixty persons, at the suspiciously low rental of twenty pounds a-year. The reason was easy to find—it was reported to be haunted!

Tall trees environed it on every side, and the gardens were like a wilderness, so neglected had the place been for years. It was three storeys in height, spacious, with a flat, leaded roof, whence one could look down upon the country through the trees. There was an abundance of out-houses in a somewhat ruinous condition. The carriage-way had become a damp lane, sometimes flooded in winter. But the building itself was sound—its walls very thick. A tragedy had taken place therein nearly half a century before the date of which I write. A captain in his Majesty's navy had lived there with an amiable young wife, to whom he was unfaithful to such an extent that, disguising his marriage, he made an offer to another young lady, and was on the point of committing bigamy. Indeed, the marriage ceremony had actually begun, when the injured wife appeared on the scene and forbade its completion. *He* ran away; *she* returned home, and in her distress hung herself in a room at the extreme angle of the top storey of the house.

The unhappy wife lies buried in a neighbouring churchyard with the following epitaph:—

Reader! if thou hast a heart framed for pity

Contemplate this spot,

Where lie the remains of one whose artless simplicity

Gained for her the esteem of all who knew her;

But whose nerves were too delicately strung to bear

The rude jostlings we must meet in this transitory world.

She died a martyr to excessive sensibility.

Mrs. S— F—

Died in the village of C—

On the 6th of June, 1799,

In the 20th year of her age.

May her soul find that peace in Heaven

Which this world denied her.

A pitiful story! And who would wonder that the

place was said to be haunted? And so it was, as I shall proceed to shew.

The rustics asserted that wheelbarrows ran about without visible agency; that pump-handles worked when the form of the worker was invisible; that the house was lighted up at night, when no one was within; and even that a benighted traveller, calling to ask his way, had the door opened to him by the ghost! My father, however, was not at all moved by all this village gossip. But he did the right thing; he went and spent a night in the house. No unearthly sight or omens appeared; all was still that night; and we took possession of the place. It was prophesied that we should not occupy it a year, but the year passed quietly away. It was in my thirteenth year that the first manifestation of a supernatural character occurred—*i.e.*, the first to my knowledge—and it was I who witnessed it.

It was a moonlight night, and I lay awake in the very chamber wherein poor Mrs. F. had committed suicide—a chamber, however, which had lost its terrors by familiarity. There were other boys in the room, but I was the only one who lay awake—when I heard heavy footsteps ascending the stairs. My father was in the habit of going round the house at night to see whether all fires and lights were out; and I thought it was he. The steps came along the passage, and, without entering any other room, came straight towards the one where I lay. I thought I would have a look at my father without revealing the fact that I was awake, and so I playfully covered my head with the clothes and twisted them so that I could look up the passage, as he would turn the corner towards the open door—through which the moonlight streamed. But instead of my father, an awful figure turned the corner, clad as it seemed to me, in a military uniform, gaunt and haggard! I started up in my bed and, half instinctively, uttered a form of adjuration which I had read in tales, of which I was a great student. Whatever it was it turned round at the words and then disappeared.

I was destined to hear that tread again. Some years had elapsed and I was nearly seventeen. I slept, then, in a little bed-chamber which opened out of a large outer room called "the lower room." One bright moonlight night "as I lay a-thinking" about some mundane subject or other, I heard steps, which awakened strange recollections, descend the stairs, outside this outer chamber. I heard the door open and the night-walker seemed to enter. The steps approached my door. It was a peculiar tread; the boots "creaked," to use a common saying, "as though they had not been paid for," and as I lay wondering who it could be, thus shod, about in the night, the sound ceased. Soon afterwards, *I heard the village clock strike three.*

The next night I was awake again by mere chance; the same phenomena were repeated; and immediately afterwards *the clock struck three again!* Then I felt sure that there was something out of the common in these steps, and I determined to lie with my door open the next night, and to see what it was. That next night, as I lay in anticipation, I heard the steps descending the stairs. I heard the outer door open. Whatever it was that entered, it certainly possessed force, for it pushed the open door of a wardrobe, which obstructed the passage, forcibly aside, and shut it with a loud noise. The steps came round between the beds where some young boys slept, towards my door, when to my amazement, no form appeared; yet the steps pressed on towards my bed. I cried aloud "Who is it?" and all was silent. I sprang out of bed and searched the room and the adjacent passages; but no elucidation of the mystery appeared.

When I communicated my night's experience (very cautiously—for my father had again and again forbidden such reports as likely to alarm the boys and prejudice the school), I found that I had stumbled on a fact known to many in secret—that *at a quarter to three each morning*

these steps paraded the house, from the chamber where the suicide was committed to the room in which I slept.

An assistant master informed me that, going upstairs at that hour, he had met the steps coming down and felt a cold blast of wind pass him, to his no small terror. My brother, younger than myself, told me that one night as he lay awake in that outer room with a bad cough, he heard them coming, and thought his father had heard him cough, and was bringing him some lozenges—when the door opened and the bodiless steps came to his bed-side, frightening him terribly. Many others had also heard the steps, but all said, "Say nothing about it; it will vex your father and do no good; neither do the steps do any harm."

At last, anxious to obtain some key to the mystery, I asked the senior assistant master to sit up all night with me in his own little room (which was partitioned off from the chamber in which the suicide had been committed) that we might endeavour to find out what was the nature of "the steps." I had not then seen the tomb of the unfortunate Mrs. F., and did not know the exact date of the tragedy, but I am inclined to think that we watched on the very anniversary of the fatal day, or rather night.

The evening passed slowly, in spite of books, and draughts, and other amusements; and contrary to my expectation—for I had imagined that midnight would not pass unmarked—all was quiet until the dawn of the summer's day made itself dimly felt through the window curtains. It was then a *quarter to three*, and we sat looking at our watches with but little expectation—for daylight is a great obstacle to belief in ghosts—when all at once, just as I had said "Unless it comes soon there will be nothing to-night!" a step, heavy and determined, was heard in the adjacent room behind the thin wooden partition. It stalked out through the door, along a little passage a few feet in length, and then passed our door. I opened the door and looked out. The passage was fairly lighted up by the breaking dawn of day, and the steps were passing heavily along it, but there was no form! We followed, but a few feet behind. The steps reached the staircase and began to descend the stairs. We looked over from the balustrade above; the stairs seemed to bend under that mysterious tread; but my companion faltered, and I followed down the flight above.

Midway there was a landing and then, turning an angle, a second short flight of stairs ended in front of a large window, and on the right hand was the door of the lower room. In the light of that summer dawn I distinctly saw the handle turn and the door open; and I heard the steps enter. I was so close behind that, as I followed, the door was slammed in my face. I pushed it open again. The room was empty, save of boys sleeping quietly in their beds, unconscious of the mystery around them. It was now nearly three o'clock, and, satisfied that the matter was beyond human agency, we slept till our usual hour of rising.

No further investigation seemed necessary. We all felt convinced it was a case of the supernatural, and left it. But sometimes a visitor would say to my father at breakfast:—

"You were about very late last night, weren't you?"

"No. I retired before midnight."

"Because I heard heavy steps about, just before three."

Then we would look at each other and say nothing.

But within a year from this time, the phenomenon (if I can apply that word where naught was seen) ceased, and for ten years the house was perfectly quiet. I often lay awake, having set my alarm for the time, but nothing whatsoever rewarded my watching. This, perhaps, may be an argument that imagination had naught to do with the matter. Mine was as much excited on the latter as on the former occasion.

Ten years passed away. My father and mother had retired from active life, and gone away to live. My brother had become the head master of the school, was mar-

ried, and residing at the old house. I was myself ordained in priest's orders and chaplain of a large school, when, just before the Christmas holidays, I received a letter from my brother in which were these words:—

"We are very anxious to see you at home again. Do you remember the ghostly disturbances about ten years ago? They have returned worse than ever, and we want your aid to investigate them."

I was about to return home to spend the Christmas vacation when I received this, and went full of anticipation, not sorry to have the opportunity, as a man, of further investigation into the mysteries which had so puzzled me as a boy. I found when I reached home, and had had a long talk over it all, that for some time there had been a renewal of the disturbances, but not quite of the like nature with the former manifestations. They centred, it is true, at the old hour, but were by no means confined to it now. I will give a few instances.

My brother told me that one night he was awake by loud cries of terror from the boys who slept in the "suicide's room," just above his own. (I need not say we did not give it that name before the pupils, nor did they know the story.) He rushed upstairs, greatly alarmed, and found several excited boys, who declared that a woman without a head had entered the room. He tried to laugh at it, comforted them, left a light burning, and came downstairs.

"Look at your watch," said his wife.

A quarter to three!

Another night my sister was sleeping in the fatal chamber, with a cousin. All at once she was awake by a loud cry, and found her companion in hysterics. The aforesaid woman had entered the room. My sister looked at her watch. (The cousin did not know the preceding facts.)

A quarter to three!

A midwife who attended at a confinement and slept in that room, after the first night asked whether she could have another chamber.

"Why?" was the natural question.

"Oh, it does not matter," she said; she would try it again; and coloured slightly as if ashamed. The next day she said she *must* sleep elsewhere for some one came into that room each night, and threw himself (or herself) down on an empty bed; but it seemed no natural person for when she struck a light there was no one there.

There were many similar tales all connected, more or less, with a *quarter to three*, but just at this time the disturbances had become worse and extended throughout the night.

For a day or two I heard nothing, so far as I can remember, but at length there came one bitterly cold night, when I had got to bed with a hot water bottle for companion to my frozen feet, in a room of the top storey where I slept. I was alone on that floor; the pupils were all home for their holidays. I had just put my light out when a series of noises began, as of the moving of furniture, the opening of doors, the parading of the passages. One would suppose every room was tenanted by restless beings save my own, which was quiet *inside*. I had gone to sleep in spite of it all—for it was too cold to get up to investigate—when I heard the ringing of a bell in my room, which had been a servants' room and communicated below. I got up and heard knocks upon the ceiling beneath my floor.

An invalid sister was then sleeping in the chamber beneath, and I accordingly put on my dressing gown, went out into the bitter atmosphere (that night a policeman was frozen to death in his box not far off), descended the stairs, and went to the door of my sister's room.

"Poor L. is so dreadfully alarmed by the noises," said my other sister, who slept with her; "do see what it all means!"

"It is useless," I said, "but I will go through the house to satisfy you that there are no robbers in it." So I went through all the large rooms of the empty house. I was the only man in it that night. All was quiet; and I went back to my sister's door, and said, "You need not fear: it is only the ghosts. They can do us no harm while we trust in God!" I then went back to my bed, but not to rest, for I was no sooner asleep than I was awoken by a fearful crash! Outside my door was a large box; this appeared, judging by the sound, to be lifted up several feet, and then allowed to fall heavily on the floor. I would not get up, and soon dozed off again. It was repeated a second time, with a deafening noise and shock. Still, I would not get up, but, commending myself to God, slept again. A third time I was awoken by the same shock.

A sudden thought inspired me. I was a priest and might try what exorcism would do. So I used, as nearly as I could remember it, the ancient form commanding the spirits to depart in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! And all was quiet through the old house during the remainder of that night. In the morning I asked my sisters, "Did you hear anything after I left you?" They replied, "Yes, three heavy smashes; then all was still."

This occurrence, more than aught else, led me to believe that the noises were the result of the agency of evil spirits.

A friend, who is a great believer in Spiritualism, tells me that I ought to have questioned the ghosts, for they can open no communication, but evidently sought such opening; and that I might have done good had I addressed them.

To conclude, from that night until we left the place it was the scene of continual disturbance. Our doors were tried at night; we saw the handles turn; steps continually paraded the passages; furniture appeared to be shifted, but never could we detect any visible agency. The most melancholy occurrence connected with these disturbances was as follows:—A poor boy was left behind in the following Christmas holidays, suffering from congestion of the lungs. He died, and one night, while the body was lying in a room adjacent to my brother's study, such dismal noises issued from the chamber of death while my brother and his wife were in their room, that they could not bear it and were obliged to go elsewhere.

And the most significant thing occurred at the same trying season. My brother was in town, and his wife was sleeping alone when she heard sounds all over the house, as if a number of carpenters and upholsterers were taking down the furniture previous to removal. She heard them, as it seemed, take down the bedsteads, and place the iron laths in succession on the floor with distinct sound. She lay terrified a long time, and then awoke a visitor who slept in the adjoining room. He, too, had heard all these noises with the utmost astonishment, greatly wondering what household arrangements thus interfered with the rest which night should bring to all. These noises were evidently prophetic, for within a year fever broke out in the village, extending to the school, and costing us two or three lives; and my brother, under medical advice, moved his whole establishment to a well-known watering-place on the South Coast, where it still flourishes.

We are all, from experience, what the world calls "believers in ghosts;" but none of us have ever had such experiences elsewhere—a strong proof that the occurrences I have detailed did not originate in our own imaginations.

DR. NICHOLS, who has been invited to lecture before the Vegetarian Society at Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Wednesday, March 14th, has promised on the following evening to give an address to the Spiritual Evidence Society at their Hall, 3, Weir-court, Newgate-street.

A CONVERSAZIONE was held on Monday evening last, at the rooms of the C.A.S., 33, Great Russell-street. The Misses Withall charmed the company with solos and duets on the pianoforte; Miss Everitt sang sweetly and with exquisite taste; Miss Allan gave some recitations very effectively; and Mr. Tietkens' songs, as usual, elicited much applause. The attendance was not so large as we should have wished to see.

THE SUPERNATURAL SCIENTIFICALLY CONSIDERED.

The Masonic Hall at Richmond, Surrey, was recently crowded on the occasion of a paper on the above subject being read by Mr. T. Sidney Hargreaves to the members and friends of the Richmond Athenæum.

In commencing his paper Mr. Hargreaves said that the conception of what was generally known as the supernatural, with its array of spectres, necromancers, wizards, witches, churchyard ghosts and bogies, soothsayers, magicians, auguries and divinations, second sight, demons, compacts with the evil one, Highland seers, divining rods, table rappings, haunted houses, and hundreds of attendant superstitions, was so closely interwoven with the existence of the human race that it would be difficult indeed to mention an age or a race in which it had not played a great part. Of course it would be as absurd in this age to accept unhesitatingly the enormous mass of improbabilities presented to us as supernatural phenomena as it would be to believe in mediæval astrology, or the possibility of finding the "elixir vite," or the "philosopher's stone." But on the other hand it was as illogical to despise and cast aside the whole mass as it would have been thus to dispose of the pseudo-sciences of a few centuries ago, and with them the invaluable knowledge of chemistry and astronomy. How did we know whether we had not, amidst this huge collection, much of which seemed incomprehensible and much absurd, a jewel of great price, a knowledge which should transcend the knowledge gained from astrology and alchemy as the sun did the earth? The somewhat uninviting aspect of the subject was greatly due to credulity and imposture. But however clearly we might trace imposture, we had no right to deny the existence of the material with which it worked, for even imposture could not make bricks without straw. The phenomena recorded were denied on the score of inherent improbability, and yet scientific knowledge was itself built up of facts which previous to their discovery would have been deemed improbable, if not impossible. Quoting from the proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Mr. Hargreaves said there appeared to be, amidst much illusion and deception, an important body of remarkable phenomena, which were *prima facie* inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis, and which, if incontestably established, would be of the highest possible value. Therefore it had been thought expedient by many eminent literary and scientific men in this country to form themselves into a society, the object of which was to sift that large group of doubtful phenomena commonly called the supernatural. Passing on to the consideration of some of these phenomena, Mr. Hargreaves first referred to thought-reading, and to the experiments of Messrs. Bishop and Stuart Cumberland. There could be but little doubt that in these cases the operator was guided by unconscious muscular indications by the sensitive and either consciously or unconsciously interpreted by the operator. He was confirmed in this opinion by the fact that after witnessing Mr. Stuart Cumberland's performances at Cambridge, he attempted the same thing himself, and out of twenty-seven experiments with different persons, he succeeded in twenty-three, and in every case in which he succeeded he received distinct muscular indications, although he was quite certain that many of the persons with whom he experimented were quite unwilling to give any conscious indications. There was, however, a second class of experiments in which, the operator and the sensitive being in contact, a sensation such as that of a taste, smell, or an object conceived by the sensitive, is interpreted by the operator. Some very peculiar experiments of this nature were made at Brighton, in which a Mr. Smith interpreted tastes, localised sensations of pain, and even scenes, and in which he was able to reproduce on paper geometrical figures conceived by the operator. The most valuable results, however, were those such as Professors Balfour Stewart and Barrett had obtained, in which interpretations were made without any contact whatever, and where deception of every kind was most sedulously guarded against. There were three hypotheses by which thought-transference without contact might be explained. One was the possibility that the sensitive might be able to interpret outward indications unconsciously given by the operator. Another was that the transmission of an idea might be accomplished by purely dynamical means, and that a nerve-current in one body might induce a similar nerve-current in another body, just as the vibrating wire in one instrument would cause to vibrate the corresponding wire in

another instrument tuned to the same pitch, and so produce the same note. The third hypothesis was that of the existence of a psychic force. Referring to the phenomena commonly known as mesmeric, with the allied one of clairvoyance, he said it was open to doubt whether the mesmeric sleep was not purely subjective, and the passes and other paraphernalia quite unnecessary to its production. Referring next to the phenomena of apparitions, he said that there were scores of instances vouched for by witnesses whose veracity none could impeach, in which a person had actually seen a presentment of an absent friend at the moment of the death of that friend. Mere coincidence would not explain a thing of that kind. It was here that there seemed to be a necessity for the existence of a hypothetical psychic force. Much had been said and written concerning Spiritualism, but after all there was probably nothing more in it than could be explained by an exalted state of the nervous system in the spectators, and fraudulent collusion and imposture on the part of professional mediums. He was bound to say, however, that no doubt there were many thoroughly conscientious persons who could relate strange experiences of spiritualistic phenomena, and it was very probable that further research would throw a strong light on the subject. He had necessarily treated the subject in a very brief and meagre manner, as in the present initiatory stage of these investigations it would not be wise to jump to conclusions hastily. But he thought they would agree with him that the matter was one of importance, and deserving of investigation. They only wanted time and careful experiments tried over and over again, and they might be certain that whether the ultimate results were the elimination of every force not at present known, or whether it resulted in the discovery of the laws of a psychic force at present only hinted at, a deal of doubt and uncertainty would be cleared up, and most valuable contributions would be made to psychology and mental physiology.

The Rev. J. Hunt Cooke said that if the subject was in an "initiatory stage" it had been in that stage for three or four thousand years, at all events. After hours of research in the British Museum in connection with those great ghost stories which were generally accepted amongst us, he had come to the conclusion that there was no satisfactory foundation for one of them. There were undoubtedly some remarkable cases on record of apparitions of persons at the point of death to friends at a distance, and upon these he suspended his judgment.

Dr. Cook contended that if what had happened in the past was in accordance with the laws of nature it could happen again. In earlier days men who saw natural powers at work which they did not understand fell down and worshipped them, and called them supernatural, but now we knew that these things were in accordance with the laws of nature because we thought we understood more about those laws. Now we believed in the things we could comprehend by the laws of nature, but refused to believe in what we could not so comprehend. That was assuming that we had a thorough and complete knowledge of the laws of nature—an assumption which was not justified. They knew that two embodied spirits could communicate their ideas, and they believed that two disembodied spirits could do so. Why, then, should it be impossible for such communication to take place between an embodied and a disembodied spirit? The Rev. J. Hunt Cooke had asked why they could not see a ghost in the daylight, but it was wrong to argue that because a thing could not be seen in daylight it could never be seen. Whoever saw the stars, except in the dark? and whoever thought of expressing a disbelief in the stars unless they were visible at noon-day? (Laughter.) There were many things which they could not explain, but it was unwise to say they did not believe in them.

Mr. Edward King said he would grant what Dr. Cook had said, that what was possible in the past would be possible in the future, but it did not follow that what was expedient in the past would be expedient in the future. In the early history of the world, when there was no printed record, there was a need for the supernatural as a means of teaching, for by its vivid impressions were made on the mind and handed down from generation to generation, but it was not needed now.

The Rev. C. F. Coutts urged that in the investigation of facts they ought to make a clear distinction between what might possibly serve some good purpose, and what could not possibly serve any purpose whatever. He thought the phenomena of Spiritualism might be placed in the latter class.

Mr. Edward T. Bennett (Secretary of the Council of the Society for Psychical Research) argued that it was not right to ask what was the use of a fact; for all facts had a scientific

value as facts. It was by approaching facts in this spirit that the great discoveries of such men as Tyndall and others had been made.

Dr. Roberts Law, referring to mesmerism, described the case of a gentleman who fell under the influence of another, and could be called to him from a room in another part of the house without any sound being made. He was incapable of passing a certain line in a room without the will of the other. He knew that to be an actual fact.

The Chairman summed up the debate in some humorous remarks.

Mr. Hargreaves then replied, and the Chairman thanked him for his excellent paper.—Abridged from the *Richmond and Twickenham Times*.

MATERIAL OBJECTS BROUGHT FROM A DISTANCE.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—If it is your wish you may publish the following:—

Not very long ago I witnessed a most astounding demonstration of the transference of matter by super-human agency from one locality to another, a distance of more than twenty miles.

I will condense as much as possible my account of this strange phenomenon, but I would first mention a word or two about the circle.

We have only six sitters, five of us being old-fashioned Spiritualists, but the sixth is a raw convert from the Wesleyan body, who for a long time past worked with great zeal for the spread of Wesleyan Methodism, and the demolition of Spiritualism.

He has now severed himself from that sect, having found more light in the spirit-circle, and he has turned out, much to his surprise, a promising trance-medium for speaking.

One or two weeks previous to this remarkable séance a friend of mine, whom I will call Mr. H. (a schoolmaster and Spiritualist), came to York to spend a short holiday, and for the time being was a sitter at our circle. It was during the last sitting we had together that Mr. H. suggested to the spirits that they should, after his return home, bring to us at York some article from his house, to which they replied, "We will try."

The two following séances were completely void of any kind of manifestations, a most unusual thing with us, but on the occasion of the third, we had been sitting from eight until half-past nine, when with almost lightning-speed there fell, close to my back, two wooden knitting needles about a foot in length. This occurred with the light only a *little* subdued.

The medium through whom this phenomenon took place is a lady of unquestionable character, and who never makes a penny out of Spiritualism. She was during the séance entranced, and sat opposite to myself. After the needles had fallen she was influenced to speak, and this is something like what she said, "The needles we have brought you were taken from out of a box upon Mr. H.'s landing. We noticed on the top of the box several jam jars. We had some little difficulty in getting the needles out. During the day Mr. H. has been rambling in the lanes gathering berries," &c., &c.

I wrote to my friend at once, mentioning all particulars, and he immediately replied confirming all as strictly true. He informed me that at half-past nine on the night when we received the needles he and Mrs. H. retired to rest. Just after entering the bedroom Mrs. H. remarked that she heard a noise on the landing, but not hearing it again took no further notice of it. The needles were, in all probability, at that very moment being taken out of the box, for that was the time the needles fell behind my back.—I remain, yours respectfully,

A. R. WILSON.

P.S.—Mr. H. has been to York, seen the needles, and claimed them as his property.

20, Orchard-street, York, February 27th, 1883.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. W. TOWNS.—The friends of Mr. Towns, who as a private medium of many years' standing will be known to many of our readers, are promoting a testimonial on his behalf, towards enabling him to overcome the effects of some recent pecuniary embarrassments, and with the further object of testifying the appreciation in which his services are held by his friends. The testimonial is to be presented at a public meeting to be held at Neumeyer Hall, on the 28th inst., and contributions can be sent to Mr. J. Wootton, 33 Little Earl-street, Soho, W.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES.

The "Medium and Daybreak."

The *Medium* of late has devoted much attention to "Oahape: The New Bible," as it is called. We have not read this work yet, and therefore can express no opinion either for or against. This much, however, we will say, that the test of a book being "divine" is a very simple one. It is this: a book or bible is "divine" or inspired to the nation or people to whom it is given just in proportion to its influence in uplifting that nation or people from ignorance to a knowledge of the truth as regards his physical and spiritual natures. Unless "Oahape" will stand this test it will not justify the large claim which it makes upon us.—The author of "The Geozonic Spheres" on "Evil Angels," is suggestive. Although we cannot follow him entirely, yet much of what he says we believe to be true. The evidence before us, however, is as yet insufficient to enable us to form a definite opinion on the subject on which he writes. Those who are perplexed by contradictory and senseless communications would do well to read his paper.—It is with the greatest pleasure we notice a paragraph to the effect that Miss Wood has at last been successful.

"We are informed that Miss C. E. Wood, the well-known medium, has been having some sances with a private circle at a private house in Newcastle, at which some excellent results have been obtained. There was no placing the medium in bonds or durance vile; but simply some dark window curtains were stretched across a corner of a dining-room, and the medium was seated a short distance in front of them, in full view of all, and dressed in a white jacket, the better to observe any movements on her part. The first five or six sittings were productive of no important result, but at both of her last two sances, a small childlike form has emerged from the curtains, and whilst standing near the medium essayed to speak. The form was somewhat attenuated and lacked the robustness which is experienced when the medium is isolated behind the curtains, but hopes are entertained that this may be overcome in time. On inquiry we are assured that there was no possibility of fraud, that Miss Wood had nothing to do with preparing the room for the sance, and that invariably she was only in the house about ten minutes before the sance commenced. About sixteen persons were present."

Mr. Burns, referring to this, says: "A cabinet is of more importance to the materialising spirit than to the medium, who, in fact, does not require it at all except as a condition for the operating spirits." Just so; that is what we have urged all along and was the basis of the much maligned Circular. However, better late than never, and we cordially welcome another recruit.

The "Banner of Light."

A report of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the development of the Davenport mediums is the principal feature of the *Banner* this week. The celebration took place in Boston, and passed off successfully.—The Rev. M. J. Savage, who has been posing as a second Joseph Cook, comes in for a second instalment of a well-merited castigation. The *Banner* does well in hoisting such men on their own petard.—Our contemporary crosses its lance with that of the *Independent*, a religio-political journal, published in New York, on the question of the evidence for the continuity of life after death. The *Banner* has by far the best of it.

The "Religio-Philosophical Journal."

The *Journal*, like its contemporary, has something to say to Mr. Savage, and says it plainly, too.—"The Little Pilgrim in the Unseen," Mrs. Olyphant's charming allegory, which first appeared in *Macmillan's*, is reprinted, and occupies a large portion of the space in the present number.—There are some signs of renewed public interest in Spiritualist meetings in Baltimore. A small but quite promising organisation is addressed each Thursday evening by Mrs. F. O. Hyzer. Years ago, under the efficient management of Colonel Danskin, meetings flourished in that city, and with the very large number of avowed Spiritualists there ought, it would seem, to be a strong and active society.—The editor of the *Journal* is now "making for" the conjurers, and has challenged Hermann to the tune of five thousand dollars on the condition that he does what has repeatedly been done through the mediumship of Mr. Slade. We have no belief that Hermann will accept the offer. Gentlemen of that ilk are far too slippery.

The "Harbinger of Light" (Melbourne).

Spiritualism in Sydney appears to be making some headway. For a long period the cause in that city, in ignorance of its own strength, has thrown in its lot with the pseudo-freethinkers. Now, however, a movement is on the *tapis* to inaugurate a purely Spiritualistic Association. That is a step in the right direction, and we wish it success. At any rate, as between Spiritualism and materialistic thought, it is well that "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." They are too antagonistic either for assimilation or harmonious working, and it is not nice to see Spiritualists coquetting with materialism.—Brisbane has started a "progressive library and reading-room" right in the centre of the main thoroughfare of that city, and a large reading-room is fitted in the rear of the shop. Three nights a week are reserved for meetings, and the rest are to be open to the

public.—William Denton is still with our Victorian friends. His style and matter are essentially adapted to Antipodean lines of thought.—Cyril Haviland's "Footsteps of Angels" is a charming little story, which bristles with Spiritualism, and in which the moral—that Spiritualism is worth just so much to a man as it influences for the better his daily life and thought, is enforced.

SPIRITUALISM IN LONDON & THE PROVINCES.

METROPOLITAN SPIRITUAL LYCEUM.

ST. ANDREW'S HALL, 14, NEWMAN STREET, OXFORD STREET, LONDON.

The subject selected for the address at this hall, on Sunday last, was "Spiritualism: its Dangers;" a title sufficiently suggestive of possible risk in association with our faith, to furnish much comfort to our friend, the enemy, who wants to know immediately whether he did not always tell you so. But this, argumentatively, is an impolitic attitude in the presence of the controls of Mr. Morse, whose preference for topics which seem to need elucidation is clearly rather encouraged than weakened by definite opposition, however clamorous or persistent, while their characteristically lucid statement and penetrating analysis are now more conspicuous than when a controversialist, in person or in purpose, is regarded as present. Dangers there may be; but they are not of the stuff the critic's dreams are made of, nor, whatever their nature or extent, should they be suffered to operate to deter the honest, earnest student of spiritual phenomena from any needful or desirable process of investigation. A present day demonstration of the after-life of humankind involves an inquiry of transcendent importance to every child of man, and no sufficient demonstration is available outside of Spiritualism. If, unaffected by threatened danger, the question is candidly approached, and the alleged facts are established, it is simply impossible to exaggerate their value: that must be admitted; but the lecturer was equally ready to suggest that if conscientious examination does not sustain the truth of the pretensions we advance, it might become an urgent duty for each of us to assist in exposing the fascinating delusion, and in demolishing the whole superstructure, for the world is in no need of added falsehoods. The subject was then presented under various aspects in two divisions: the first dealing with the Spiritualist himself, and shewing how he is affected by the contingencies of the situation; the second describing the relation of the facts to the outer world: and we were urged to remember that, in any case, the examination of the question undoubtedly requires great deliberation, indomitable perseverance, and a pure and unprejudiced, not less than an honest and earnest, frame of mind. As affecting the Spiritualist himself, then, the possible danger to health was the first introduced. The doctors at the outset generally have it altogether their own way. They are so learned—or is it so ignorant! their terminology is so distracting; their shake of the head so conclusive (when the patient is amiably submissive, that is to say) that it is not always easy to overcome or to disregard the initial difficulty of their opposition. Hysteria and nervous derangement; then traces of insanity; presently positive religious mania; so is the agony piled up. The debilitating effects of the high pressure of current social habits, of forms of education, of sentimental religion, may produce similar manifestations of disturbed health alike of body and mind; but in that case there is apparently no need, as with the Spiritualist's troubles, to speak of confirmed physiological and nervous disorder. Look at the medium, say the doctors; he speaks in trance; he writes without personal volition; he professes to heal the sick; all, especially the last, signs of mania. Now, if these gentlemen would but carefully examine the phenomena and the related nervous physiological or psychical conditions, they would, in all probability, get upon the track which would conduct them to a fair and accurate appreciation of the intricacies of nervous physics. At present the wonder is, not that ill-health is occasionally apparent, and that mediums are sometimes as sallow and sunken-eyed as ministers of the Church or other earnest brain-workers, but, considering the prevalent ignorance of the relative action of bodies and nerves, that the cases of breakdown are so few. A truer knowledge of the qualities characteristic of the medium, and of many other conditions of life and work which need not now be specified, but which affect every department of labour, would teach all alike how, in the exercise of every human faculty, to escape ill-health. Prolonged strain is especially unwise; it must ultimate in severe reaction, and cannot well fail to be disastrous; but it is not peculiar to mediumship, and when sustained application to any subject or purpose develops symptoms clearly indicative of enfeebled health, physical or nervous, and the will is not strong enough to resist the otherwise inevitable effects, then that work or effort should be abandoned. The study of any science requires self-command and discretion. Why, then, should we hesitate to admit that in this degree there is danger in Spiritualism? For the reason that the danger is in the method and the indiscretion, and it is unfair to speak of that as, in any true sense, a danger specifically affecting Spiritualism. At the bottom of the mischief, wherever manifested, will be found an imperfect acquaintance with, or an

absolute ignorance of, the physiological conditions of health, of the separate and relative action of the nervous system, of the nature and powers of the human will; and this position is in no sense or degree special to Spiritualism. The next alleged danger was rather of a spiritual or psychological character. The subject cannot be approached, says the inquirer, because I fear to get into contact with evil spirits, and all their associated horrors. This is truly a distressing speculation, and we hesitate, because the allusion may seem unkind, to say to you, "Birds of a feather flock together," but that is a proverb not less spiritually than conventionally true all the same; and these congenial evil spirits in the flesh are not always or solely in the criminal dock, for some of them lead very respectable lives indeed, as things go, and are richly clothed and sumptuously served. There is risk then; but it is not in Spiritualism, and will not affect the true and the pure and the earnest, honest investigator simply craving for light and progress. However, whence arises the trouble, if it does exist? We should like to speak to you more plainly than at this present moment we think it well to do, for we would take you back to ante-natal conditions and insist that until childhood is born in honour there cannot fail to be danger of the contingency of depraved tendencies; an atom of viciousness which develops until the power of resistance to evil is at its lowest point. Such are always open to attack as a consequence of that law of life which says, that as are the character and affinities of the individual so is the quality of the spiritual connection. You may rebel against this absolutely true position, and question the goodness and purpose of God; but without now breaking off into that inquiry further than to say that seeming evils have usually certain compensating effects, let it suffice to affirm that by the cultivation of your will-power and the consequent subjugation of wayward tendencies, the resources of your nature will not fail you to prevent the approach of evil spirits. Then there is the moral, and finally, the religious contention. Spiritualism is distinctly immoral, it is said; and so serious and difficult of disproof is such a charge generally, that the accused usually suffers judgment to go by default; but we cannot permit that now. It is said to be immoral because it has taught extravagant social doctrines, is always aggressive towards the established order of things, is democratic, and generally disturbing. Similar charges were formulated against Jesus and His disciples as against many another new philosophy, the truth being that a system which aims at elevating the moral standard is always exposed to such misrepresentation precisely in proportion to the searching character of its ethical teaching. Spiritualism is no exception to the rule: its truths can and do liberate the moral consciousness in its higher forms, and may well be trusted to protect the lower. In religion the accusation is still more grave, for it is said that Spiritualism detaches us from the service of God, rejects the Saviour, denies special inspiration, has no respect for parson, or church, or sanctity, questions the existence of the devil and of hell, and generally and finally leads to pronounced atheism. And these formidable charges are hurled at you because you reconstruct your religious opinions, throwing out some manifestly untrue to secure a firmer grip upon others, leading to larger and, as we think, more worthy views of God, and to a better understanding of the conditions and character of the future life, the acceptance of the truth of a personal participation in inspirational action, leading to a sustained and truly fruitful religious progress. We neither deny God, nor reject inspiration or spirituality, and there is again no danger here, while as a matter of fact the Spiritualist is simply one of the advanced guard of that daily increasing army determined to work out its own freedom from human shackles in the domain of opinion. He believes in and accepts the universal Hope, and will not grieve over much at any epithet bestowed upon him while he preserves his reverence for truth. So far we contend that there are no dangers associated with Spiritualism; but now we must briefly signalise three which really deserve to be so regarded. First, the danger of accepting as necessarily true whatever is stated as such by the communicating spirits; next, that of the deterioration of mediums as the result of our exaggeration of their qualities and services; and finally that of a certain heedlessness in the formation of circles of inquiry which otherwise are the very corner stone of Spiritualism. We were reminded that every statement conveyed to us from the spirit-world should be as carefully examined by the light of reason and common sense as though made by one of ourselves in the flesh; that the flattery, amounting to worship sometimes, of the medium is especially disastrous because enfeebling the material with which spirits work; and that meetings for investigation should be conducted with the sweetly pure and divinely beautiful characteristics of the home circle, where foreign influence is rightly excluded. Having regard to these real dangers, from which, however, the way of escape is clear enough, we may hope presently to reach forward to and grasp the common heritage of humanity, the crown and glory of spirit communion founded upon justice and truth, every Spiritualist remembering how much the honour of the cause depends upon his individual character. The second main division of the subject, that describing summarily the relation of the facts to the outer world, may be dismissed in a few words. Its purpose was to shew that there is unquestionable danger in Spiritualism to the generally accepted

theories of life and morals, for the broad and liberal religion of the Spiritualist cannot fail to deal out some heavy blows to Sacerdotalism; his moral conceptions of inherent beauty and completeness must come into collision with superficial pretence; and his unflinching self-respect will assume a position of confirmed antagonism towards ignorance and vice; so that, alike in the Church and in society, there is danger to conventionalism, and the source of the danger is Spiritualism. Now the position thus faintly indicated will constitute really the conspicuous glory of Spiritualism, for it involves the certainty of the assured predominance of truth, and of enduring righteousness, with the consequent development of those qualities in man which shall allow every individual to draw upon his own spiritual nature with such effect that he shall find within himself every faculty needful for spirit-communion, free alike from the sense and the reality of danger. S. B.

LIVERPOOL.

Last Sunday, the Rodney Hall was again crowded to its utmost capacity by an intelligent and attentive audience to listen to Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten's lectures. The subject in the morning was "Spiritual Gifts," the *modus operandi* of both physical and mental manifestations being exhaustively treated. In the evening the subject was the "History of Satan:" a reply to the Rev. Mr. Skewes' second sermon on Spiritualism. The closest attention was paid to the lecture, which occupied an hour and a-half in delivery, and was said by those who had frequently heard Mrs. Britten to be one of the most brilliant orations they ever heard delivered through her lips. The lecturer gave copious illustrations of the subject to prove that the devil had been personified in the adverse influences of nature's operations; especially those of the seasons of the year. Chaldean, Indian, Hindoo, and Egyptian Mythology was largely laid under contribution to prove her case. A challenge was given by Mrs. Britten, at the close, to the Rev. L. H. Skewes or other reverend gentlemen, to discuss the questions on any week evening which could be agreed on.—C. F.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

NEWCASTLE.—On Sunday morning the platform of the Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society was occupied by Mrs. E. W. Wallis, of Nottingham, who discoursed upon "Spiritualism a Religion." The audience was large for a Sunday morning. In the evening she lectured to a larger company than any that has assembled at Weirs Court for a long while, the subject being "Man: his Nature, Needs, and Attributes." The lecturer handled her subject with remarkable ability, discussing her position from point to point in the most clever and intelligent manner. On the Monday evening she again addressed an excellent audience, upon our "Homes and Employments in the Future Life." Mrs. Wallis gives excellent promise as a speaker of no mediocre ability. We wish her God speed and trust her labours may meet their just reward wherever her lot may be cast in the future. A considerable amount of regret prevails among the members of the Newcastle and Gateshead Societies at the damage which is being done to our movement in the North by the persistent advertisement of Michael Chambers as a physical medium. It will be remembered, as I noticed in this column during the latter part of last year, that the then ruling committee, having some grave doubts as to the genuineness of his mediumship, passed a resolution to the effect that he could no longer be recognised as the medium of the Newcastle Society, and yet of late he has been advertised to such an extent that several of the societies have engaged him, only to be grievously disappointed, and thoroughly disgusted at the palpable unreality of his professed mediumship. It is only a few months ago that he was travelling with a conjurer in the West of Durham, giving entertainments "exposing" Spiritualism.

GATESHEAD.—On Sunday last, through the speaker not turning up as promised, the friends held an "experience meeting," at which several friends spoke with considerable effect. Altogether a pleasant evening was passed. On Sunday next Mr. T. G. Grey will lecture on "Old Truths and New Ones."

HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING.—Mr. Joseph Stephenson lectured in the Mechanics' Hall on Sunday evening last upon "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" The attendance was good and the discourse was much appreciated by those present.

HETTON-LE-HOLE.—On Sunday night last Mr. H. Burton, of the Gateshead Society, lectured upon "The Religion of the Future." The meeting was crowded with an intelligent and attentive audience, who enthusiastically received the many effective points of the speaker's discourse. The Chairman, Mr. Clennal, said, on closing the meeting, that they had just listened to the most able and effective lecture they had heard since they were established.—NORTHUMBRIA.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Several interesting communications are unavoidably deferred till next week.

THE COUNCIL OF THE C. A. S. will meet on Tuesday next, at 6.30 p.m.

THE CONDUCT OF PUBLIC PHYSICAL SEANCES.

Circular issued by the Central Association of Spiritualists, 38, Great Russell-street, W.C.

Few Spiritualists can have failed to note, with regret, the deterioration which has of late years taken place in the conditions under which physical phenomena have been sought in public seances.

These conditions—so favourable to fraud on the part of dishonest mediums, and so calculated to excite suspicion in the minds of observers—have led to the most disastrous results. We are not speaking without full warrant when we say that there is hardly a public medium for physical manifestations in this country against whom, at one time or other, charges of imposture have not been brought. We fear that in some cases no reasonable doubt can be entertained that fraud of the grossest kind was really perpetrated; while in other cases there is reason to believe that—whatever may have been the appearance to inexperienced spectators—there was no conscious deception on the part of the medium.

But in either case the name of Spiritualism has been brought into discredit, and we are forcibly driven to the conclusion that other methods of procedure must be amended. We must demonstrate our abhorrence of imposture by disavowing and discouraging all conditions which do not plainly shut out even the suspicion of its impossibility.

Obviously these remarks can have little reference to family circles, which are naturally held sacred by those who regard them as affording opportunities for veritable "communion with the dead." But it is open to grave question whether—even in the case of family circles—*inquirers* should ever be permitted to make their first acquaintance with Spiritual phenomena by introduction to seances held for physical manifestations in the dark, or where a cabinet is used for the seclusion of the medium.

We are chiefly concerned, however, with what are known as public or promiscuous seances for physical manifestations.

These have been of late years generally marked by the following characteristics:—(1) The seance has been conducted in imperfect light, or in total darkness. (2) The medium has been isolated from the circle, by being placed either in a cabinet or behind a curtain. (3) The sitters have been, either wholly or in part, unacquainted with the subject and with each other. (4) There has not unfrequently been a manifest want of harmony, consequent upon differences of opinion as to the nature and value of the tests employed.

These conditions, usually found in combination, effectually preclude careful and dispassionate investigation; open wide an avenue to fraud; suggest suspicion of its presence even where it does not exist; and in many cases, we fear, expose the medium to very injurious influences.

Such conditions should be allowed to prevail no longer. "Mixed" circles should be as little mixed as possible—mere wonder-seekers, and men whose moral atmosphere is known to be impure, being carefully excluded. Above all, darkness should give way to light. In the early days of Spiritualism public dark circles were the exception, and there is no need for them now. There is abundant evidence that, with mediums of the present day, satisfactory phenomena, including even "form" manifestations, can be obtained without isolation—the medium, where a cabinet is used, being placed near, but *outside of it*, and in full view of the sitters. But even if this were not so, it is neither wise nor honourable to expose mediums to the risks which have been shewn to attend seances held under the conditions that have of late been prevalent; and it were far better that we should have no public manifestations of physical phenomena than that they should be sought under circumstances which, to say the least, inevitably conduce to suspicion.

In view of all these considerations, believing that fraud is not of the essence of this confessedly obscure subject, but rather an accident dependent on faulty conditions of research; feeling that Spiritualists have the remedy for the evil in their own hands, and that without its conscientious application they cannot hope to maintain a fair reputation before the world; we earnestly recommend—*That in all public circles held for physical phenomena, the medium be so placed, and in such light, as to be continuously under observation by each member of the circle.*

Edwin Adams, Cardiff
W. P. Adshad, Derby
Alexander Aksakof, St. Petersburg
G. P. Allan, London
W. R. Armstrong, Newcastle-on-Tyne
R. Baikie, M.D., late H.E.I.C.S., Edinburgh
*T. P. Barkas, F.G.S., Newcastle-on-Tyne
Frederick A. Binney, Manchester
*Anna Blackwell, Paris
John L. Bland, President of Hull Psychological Society
Hannah Blundell, Manchester
John James Bodmer, London
Hugh Booth, Sowerby Bridge
Eliza Boncher, Minehead
Colonel Joshua Brayn, Jersey
Emma Hardinge-Britten, Manchester
William Brown, Burnley
Henry Burton, Newcastle-on-Tyne
Alexander Calder, London
†Robert Redgrave Cann, Harleston, Norfolk
Robert Scammell Clarke, Hon. Sec. Plymouth Free Spiritual Society

John Colley, Hon. Sec. Birmingham Christian Spiritualist Society
John Cowie, Dumbarton
John Crane, Houghton-le-Spring
William Day, Ipswich
James Dawbarn, London
Thomas Dawson, Hon. Sec. Gateshead Spiritualist Society
David Duguid, Glasgow
T. H. Edmunds, Sunbury-on-Thames
W. Eglinton, London
J. Crossley Eno, Dulwich
Thomas Everitt, London
John S. Farmer, London
Lewis Firth, Hon. Sec. Rochdale Spiritualist Society
Richard Fitton, Manchester
Charlotte Fitzgerald, London
D. G. Fitzgerald, M.S.Tel.E., London
Elizabeth Fitzgerald, London
Hannah Ford, Leeds
George Forster, Hon. Sec. Seghill Spiritualist Association
H. E. Frances, Hon. Sec. Brixton Psychological Society
William Gill, Brighton
Henry Goodchild, Hon. Sec. Middlesborough Assoc. Spiritualists
Thomas Grant, Maidstone
G. F. Green, London
Joseph N. Greenwell, Hon. Sec. Dalston Association
S. C. Hall, F.S.A., London
Mrs. F. V. Hallock, Chiswick, London
William Hardy, Hon. Sec. Sheffield Psychological Association
Samuel Hayes, Hon. Sec. Macclesfield Society of Spiritualists
Georgiana Houghton, London
H. F. Humphreys, London
Berks T. Hutchinson, L.D.S., R.C.S.I., Cape Town, South Africa.
Hugh Hutchinson, President Islington Home Circle
John Emore Jones, London
H. A. Kersey, Newcastle-on-Tyne
W. F. Kirby, London
Edward Larrad, President Leicester Spiritualist Society
John Lamont, Liverpool
P. G. Leymarie, President Soc. Sci. d'Etudes Psychologiques, Paris
J. E. Lightbown, Hon. Sec. Manchester and Salford Soc. Spiritualists
R. W. Lishman, Hon. Cor. Sec. Central London Spir. Evidence Soc.
"M.A. (Oxon.)," London
Iver MacDonnell, London
John McE. Munro, Hon. Sec. Glasgow Association of Spiritualists
Thomas McKinney, Peterborough
C. C. Massey, London
*William Miall, London
William Morris, London
J. J. Morse, London
Hay Nisbet, Glasgow
Rolen Noel, London
W. G. Pickersgill, London
Thomas Pinkey, Durham
Richard Pearce, London
Cornelius Pearson, London
Edward R. Pease, London
*Frank Podmore, London
*Thomas Pole, Clifton
*Charles Poole, Hon. Sec. Yorkshire District Com. of Spiritualists
John Pringle, Hon. Sec. Hutton Spiritual Society
S. R. Reilman, London
George Ridley, Hon. Sec. North Durham Spiritualist Society
A. J. Riko, The Hague
W. C. Robson, Newcastle-on-Tyne
James Robertson, Glasgow
E. Dawson Rogers, London
George Rogers, President Macclesfield Society of Spiritualists
John Rouse, Croydon
Adam Rushton, Minister, Macclesfield Society of Spiritualists
Rev. Dr. Sexton, London.
*Thos Shorter, London
J. Bowring Sloman, Plympton
S. T. Speer, M.D. (Edin.), London
M. A. Stack, London
Lucia C. Stone, Bridport
Edith L. Stone, Bridport
Morell Theobald, London
Ellen Miall Theobald, London
A. Teague, Hon. Sec. South African Spiritual Evidence Society
E. A. Tietkens, London
I. Thompson, Manchester
*E. Louisa Thompson Nosworthy, Liverpool
Charles Tomlinson, London
George Tommy, Bristol
Jno. P. Turner, Leamington
Mary Wainwright, London
†Alfred Russel Wallace, F.R.G.S., Godalming
E. W. Wallis, Nottingham
*Rev. W. Whitear, London
A. S. Winchester, San Francisco.
W. Winlow, Hon. Sec. Ashington Spiritual Society, Northumberland
Oswald Wirth, Paris
George Wyld, M.D., London
J. F. Young, Llanelly

[Persons wishing to have their names added to the above list are invited to intimate their desire to the Resident Secretary, Mr. Thomas Blyton, 38, Great Russell-street, W.C.]

* Is of opinion that public miscellaneous seances for physical manifestation should be altogether discontinued.
† Would prefer that the word "conscious" should be omitted from the last sentence of the second paragraph.
‡ Is of opinion that public miscellaneous seances and professional mediumship for physical manifestations should be altogether discouraged.
§ Is opposed to all public seances, whether in the light or the dark, unless the conditions are favourable to a complete investigation.