

Light:

A Journal of Psychological, Occult, and Mystical Research.

"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!"—Goethe.

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[The Editor of "LIGHT" desires it to be distinctly understood that he can accept no responsibility as to the opinions expressed by Contributors and Correspondents. Free and courteous discussion is invited, but writers are alone responsible for the articles to which their names are attached.]

NOTES BY THE WAY.

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

THE GOD-IDEA.

PART I.

In writing about the massacre of the innocents at Sunderland, the *Spectator* raises that old and perplexing question, the inscrutable nature of the Divine Will. Such considerations as the following must have presented themselves to every reflecting mind when now and again some desperate catastrophe shocks and saddens us, and even when it meditates on the daily tale of human suffering and sorrow, or on the way in which the weak, however pure and good, are ground down and tortured by the strong who prey upon them.

The *Spectator* meditates thus:—

"What should we say of a man who, merely by putting a thought into Mr. Fay's head, the thought to stand at the gallery-door and see the children out in batches, could have prevented that ghastly massacre, and did not put it? Yet that must be true of the Almighty, if any one of our ideas about His attributes is true, if He foresees, if He is all-powerful, if He has free-will. Apart from the suffering—suffering often to the good, for it was probably the kindest parents who sent their children to the show—why does He allow all that monstrous waste of life among the innocent, that destruction of potential usefulness? The only answer is the simple and unsatisfying one that we know nothing about the matter, and never shall know all, though we may know much more than we do now. Man cannot know the policy of God, which is not shewn as changed, but as always the same, in these great catastrophes. They do but concentrate a process which never stops. Taking Asia and Europe together, the half of all children born die before they are two. It is certain that more children died in London in the week of the catastrophe, unnoticed, than died in Sunderland to the horror and pity of the world. It is quite probable, though there are no statistics, that more children died in the United Kingdom still-born on Saturday than died in that staircase shambles. Vast, unending, inexplicable waste of life, never utilised even for a little while, is the law of the planet, the will of its Creator, as little to be made intelligible by thought as the endless mystery of non-educative pain. Theology gives us no more light on the subject than Science does, and though it is best, or at least most comforting, to think that the children are the happier for escaping this life and its miseries, there is no proof of that—rather evidence from analogy that they lose an opportunity which would have been to their profit. Why not, if the world, and life in the world, are, as we all suppose, of any use at all? Men are not the better for escaping, but for fulfilling, duties. There is no explanation whatever to be found, nor is

there any need of one. If man acknowledges God at all, he must acknowledge a Being whose wisdom must be so far above his own that failure to perceive it is failure in the creature, not in the Creator. It may not be an absurdity, though it seems one to us, to recognise God, and yet think that He can err; but it is certainly a folly to think that we can detect error in Him. The theologian, like every other man, is studying the Infinite, and when he has thought himself out, he can only acknowledge that he is always at last face to face with a mystery past his solution. Thought sometimes only helps us to pile up more figures on the recurrent decimal."

Is there any answer to this? On the *Spectator's* assumption of a Personal God, who is omnipotent and omniscient, and who possesses free-will, I can see none whatever that is even moderately satisfactory. I can find none that does not do dishonour to my idea of God: none that would not revolt the moral consciousness, to say nothing of the affections of an average human father. We must apply to God our own standard of morality, or we shall become involved at once in difficulty. And to consider for a moment that heartrending catastrophe was Divinely foreseen, could have been and was not Divinely prevented, is to call up to the mind a picture of the Deity which one does not like to glance at for a moment. That there is no intellectual need for any explanation of this mystery, I cannot agree. The *Spectator* feels the need, or it would not waste time in such discussions. Have Spiritualists any light to throw upon the subject—the old Free-will and necessity difficulty in one of its many forms?

I am not prepared to discuss the question on metaphysical grounds, nor to offer any opinion, here and now, on the explanation which Mr. Sinnett, in his recent book, gives of this and similar difficulties. If there be, indeed, no heart in the government of the universe, nothing but the ceaseless march of inexorable law, then there is no more to be said. To complain that the feelings and affections are shocked by any product of a law is merely foolish, if there be no law-giver with "a heart of ruth" in him who can be touched by our supplications. Nor is it relevant here to apply the words of any revelation to the settlement of this question. For those who accept as final the revelation made to man by Christ the question is already closed. For those who desire reverently to apply their knowledge of the things of spirit, experimentally gained, to supplement and support that belief which is of Faith and not of Sight, the question is an open one. Nor need the description be tainted with any word or thought that lacks the fullest reverence. There is nothing necessarily irreverent in the most free and searching discussion of any question that touches religion; though many, no doubt, shrink from applying to what belongs to their peace here and hereafter the methods of thought and analysis which they use in every other inquiry. There is nothing irreverent in free handling, though many will be ready now, as heretofore, with the parrot-cry: "This blasphemer saith." But Spiritualists are used to that. What have they to say, then?

This first. We are hampered in our most elementary attempts to grasp the idea of God by the difficulty most of us feel in conceiving intelligence without the limitations of a personality, such as that with which we are

familiar in ourselves. Few have grasped the notion that in the higher development of spiritual life this *personality* may be done away, and what we loosely call the *individuality*, now so prized, be lost for ever. I am not pretending that this is so : I am merely saying that it is difficult for many, whose thoughts have never run in this direction, to conceive of it as possible. Most people, consciously or unconsciously, associate the idea of a Supreme Intelligence with their highest ideal of human perfection. Their God is, in fact, a glorified man with all human faculties and qualities developed to the pitch of perfection : a Being of perfect power, wisdom, and beauty, but a *Being in the form of man*.

Again. Spirits who return to earth have little to tell apparently of God, except in cases where the subject matter of the communication is manifestly tinged with the private opinions of the medium. But, putting aside such messages as quite unauthoritative, the general drift of spirit-teaching is curiously in the direction of what I may call a refined and spiritualised Pantheism. It seems as though the dissolution of the "prison-house of the body" had removed the great barrier to the conception of a Supreme Intelligence, a Great Over-soul, untrammelled by the limitations that we throw around our conceptions of Him. We hear little of the Great Judge, of the King of Heaven, of the Ancient of Days on His throne "high and lifted up." We hear much of the tender care of the guardians, of their benevolent interference with this world, of the educational methods that they employ. To their listening ear comes the cry that brings willing aid and loving sympathy, and not, as it seems and as is indeed probable enough, to the ear of the Supreme. Of Him (if we must still speak of Him under human limitations) we hear little, and of Him they who come to us evidently know nothing of a surety. How should they? Yet they say much of the blessing that comes of earnest prayer, and inculcate the duty upon us. Its reflex benefits, as well as its direct blessings, are uniformly insisted on. But it is the intermediary agent that hears and responds.

If this conception be in any degree approximate to truth, it is manifestly erroneous to speak of God permitting, or not preventing, or specially arranging events and occurrences on this earth. Such terms are inapplicable. To talk, therefore, of "vast, unending, inexplicable waste of life" as "the will of the Creator," is to convey a misconception as great in a different way as that other strange saying of the *Spectator's*, that "no explanation is needed" of this perplexing waste of human life, "this mystery past solution." All our glimpses behind the veil that enwraps the future in obscurity, go to shew us a battle-ground of contending powers of good and evil. We dimly see that the human spirit is strengthened by conflict, perfected through suffering, nerved to resist temptation by reiterated assault. The powers of evil wage war with the good, and it is the din of strife that fills our ears. Over all it is a pious belief that there reigns the Supreme Power, aloft, enthroned in eternal calm, while the ministers and messengers discharge their several duties of succour and support, and while the adversaries, hating light, and warring with the good because it is good, carry on the conflict out of which issues development and progress for humanity. But, be this as it may—and we must betake ourselves to the Bibles of various faiths to trace the development of the God-idea—to represent this Supreme Being as, in the anthropomorphic conception of a vulgarised theology, He is represented, is to substitute for the reticence of an ignorance that preserves its reverent faith the crude and foolish imaginings of a mind that has lost its reverence in the mazes of audacious speculation. When God is pictured for us as a man of infinite power and wisdom, and yet as careless of our lives,

and heedless of our woes, the mind that thinks at all rejects the idea as that of a God palpably made in the image of man, the outcome of his crude conceptions, and having no probable existence or verisimilitude.

Better far the vague conception of an Over-soul, a pervading Spiritual Essence, impersonal though it be, and interfering, perhaps, in no wise with the affairs of this world of ours, than the most definite and highly-coloured conception of a glorified man, who is at once able to do all we need, whom our cries can reach but cannot touch, yet who is idly careless of our fate, as he leaves us struggling in the meshes of the pitiless and tyrannical law which encompasses us on this side and on that. Such a God is too obviously human ; too crudely anthropomorphic to be taken seriously. The higher Spiritualism has done much already to break this image, and if it does not replace it by another, it, at least, leaves the domain of faith where mystery reigns, undisfigured by the intrusion of a palpable Fetish. It leaves the Great Spirit Supreme, but it refuses to avow and illustrate its ignorance by imposing upon Him limitations of "body, parts, or passions," or comprehending Him in human form. Still less does it depict him as the impossible tyrant that vulgar theology has made Him.

M. A. (Oxon.)

THE SEYBERT BEQUEST.

A special telegram to the *Chicago Tribune*, from Philadelphia, Pa., says : "The late Henry Seybert, who gave the new bell for Independence Hall, left a large number of bequests, amounting to over half-a-million, for public and charitable uses, among which was one of 50,000dols. to endow a chair of moral and intellectual philosophy in the University of Pennsylvania, with the expressed wish that the university would respectfully and thoroughly investigate Modern Spiritualism, in which he was a firm believer. The university accepted the bequest, and has now begun steps to carry out the wish of the testator. A commission has been appointed of which the chairman is Dr. William Pepper, the Provost of the university, and a gentleman of acknowledged scientific attainments of a high order. There is now on hand available for the prosecution of the investigation the sum of 1,000dols. No formal meeting of the commission has as yet been held, although there exists among the members a general understanding of the work and the necessities of the investigation. No member thereof is openly committed to a belief in the 'so-called Modern Spiritualism,' so that it is doubtful whether they will be able to arrive at those conclusions which would have been most gratifying to Mr. Seybert." It further appears that the commission does not view with much favour the examination of spiritual phenomena. The *Religio-Philosophical Journal* thinks this episode shews the supreme folly of a Spiritualist, with plenty of money and a desire to advance the interests of Spiritualism, who delays doing his duty in his life, and then leaves a large sum for the purpose in his will. Instead of using the money as intended by the donor, it is to be prostituted by the opponents of Spiritualism and spent in fighting the theory of spirit communion. We hope there may possibly be some way by which the University of Pennsylvania can be compelled to constitute a commission which shall carry out the intention of the donor, but it is doubtful.

WHO SHALL SAY

That from the world of spirits comes no greeting?
No message of remembrance? It may be
The thoughts that visit us, we know not whence,
Sudden as inspiration, are the whispers
Of disembodied spirits speaking to us
As friends, who wait outside a prison wall
Through the barred windows speak to those within.

—*Longfellow's Michael Angelo, in Atlantic Magazine.*

The current issue of the *Fortnightly Review* contains an article by Dr. Donkin, entitled "Miracles and Medium Craft," upon which we shall have something to say shortly.

"WHAT WENT YE OUT FOR TO SEE?"

The *Religio-Philosophical Journal* of July 7th, has a spirit message entitled "What went ye out for to see?" which is full of sound common-sense. We make a few extracts:—

The Popular Estimate of Spiritualism.

Examination into a subject embracing so much that is beyond the limit of physical sight and hearing, requires far more skill than is required to decide upon a case based simply upon obtainable evidence. And yet some of the most intellectual among men, do not hesitate to condemn any and all phases of spiritual phenomena, and their decisions are accepted by the world as final. Because an opinion has obtained popularity, is no evidence that it is right, and should not be appealed from. Experience proves that the majority is as liable to be in error as the minority, and we will go still farther and say that in the majority of cases the minority is more apt to be right than the majority. Numbers may add weight, avoidupois, but it is questionable whether they always embrace the greater amount of intelligence. Therefore, in forming an opinion, it is unwise to accept the opinions of numbers without examining into their intellectual attainments.

The Motives Actuating Investigators into Spiritualism.

The spiritual séance is not a place for curiosity seekers. If there are no higher aims than to gratify this morbid spirit, then it were better that the doors of the séance room be closed against them, regardless of what they may say or do. There is no safety for mediums or honest investigators so long as the spiritual séance is made a public highway, and every one applying for admission should be asked: "What came ye for to see? A reed shaken by the wind, to see a table tip, to hear a rap, to see a materialised form? What did you come for? What are your motives?" Such questions might be considered impertinent, but they are in every sense proper. What man will admit a stranger into his home without inquiring the nature of his business? What man will allow another to call him friend, without first informing himself whether the one professing friendship is every way worthy? There is no necessity for yielding to former customs when they have been proved detrimental to the general welfare of mediums and inquirers into the truths of Spiritualism. When investigators learn to deport themselves as they would have to upon entering any church or religious gathering, and respect the feelings and opinions of Spiritualists, it will be time enough to admit them, and not before. We hold that there is no place so holy as the séance chamber; it is there you meet with those who have passed to the better land; you are holding communion with the spirits of those mourned as dead but who, in the kindness of their souls, return to assure you that they still live. And if any human being is entitled to respect, it is the returning spirit.

The Real Meaning of Spiritualism.

We regard the words chosen as a basis for our remarks quite as applicable to Spiritualists as to those beginning their investigations into the subject; and we would recommend all to ask themselves what they are looking for; if only a reed shaken by the wind or by spirit power, to go to their homes and remain there until they are duly prepared to continue their investigations. There are vast numbers who seem to think that witnessing phenomena is the whole of Spiritualism; they never, after witnessing the phenomena, think it necessary to search for the laws underlying these manifestations, and if asked to explain some of the principles they profess, are wholly incompetent to do so; the most they can do is to relate what they have witnessed, and are often surprised that the whole world is not converted to Spiritualism. Let such persons count up the number they have been instrumental in bringing into the spiritual fold, and their wonderment will cease to astonish them. Another class ignore all phenomena, and seek only for what they are pleased to term the more intellectual phases, but this is like teaching the child its alphabet; they carry with them their old ideas of people entering heaven in droves, which cannot be done; no man can enter a heavenly state until intellectually qualified to comprehend what that state is. Men never attain eminence at a single jump; every step of the way must be carefully studied; our most prominent lecturers, besides having abilities, make use of every opportunity to cultivate their natural inherited gifts, and what is beneficial in one department, will be found equally so in every department.

"What came ye out for to see?" Is there anything about Spiritualism that is not explainable? Do you expect to see a

miracle wrought? If so, you will be disappointed. And yet you may witness similar manifestations to those occurring in the presence of the medium of Nazareth. The people called the healing of the sick a miracle, because the methods adopted were new to them. But there is no mystery about this kind of manifestation to-day; they are so common that people have ceased to wonder at them or to relate them to their neighbours. In the early days of spiritual dispensation the healing of a sick person by laying on of the hands, would have been, and no doubt was, the wonder of the age. But the present race have become familiar with those things and pass them by with as little concern as they would the most trivial circumstance in every-day life. A few years ago a materialised spirit form would have filled the world with wonderment, but it is not so now. You speak of such manifestations as among the common occurrences of life, and yet how few there are even with all the enlightenment of the age, that fully realise that when they look upon a spirit form, or listen to a spirit speaking to them, that things are what they purport to be. You don't seem to grasp the reality of the matter; only think for a moment that what has been the burden of ages from remotest time down to the present, the cry has been, "O God, give us some proof of a future life;" but age has followed age into the bottomless abyss of time and space, and these anxious souls have, one by one, dropped out of the line of march, without any proof of immortality. But how is it to-day with the gates of the spirit-world flung wide open, and the so-called dead coming back and taking upon themselves temporal bodies, and controlling another's ignorance of speech—for what purpose? Simply to answer the prayers of the ages, to prove that there is no death. Do you love to hear them tell of their homes in spirit life? Does it bring you any nearer the great *Over Soul*? And do you feel to thank all the powers that be, that your lot has been cast in such heavenly places? We are afraid a great many may forget even themselves upon such occasions, and treat the returning spirits with less consideration than they would a boon companion returning home from a journey.

Modern Spiritualism is peculiarly adapted to meet the wants of all truth-loving souls. There is not one grain of sense in the structure of mankind but what is appealed to, and all that is required is for mortals to lay hold of the facts before them and profit by them. Spiritualism to become a success, must be separated from immoralities; whatever appeals to the baser passions, and tends to degrade mankind, must not be saddled on to the already loaded backs of spirits. Let mortals bear all their own burdens of this character, and study how they can rid themselves of all that is vile and unseemly in them. Let your investigations be made in a spirit of earnestness, with humility and candour, and we promise you, you will not return to your homes unrewarded. The people of this age seem not to understand how much they are aroused above all preceding ages, but we trust ere long that there will be a general awakening of the people to their own best interests. We are not travellers here, bound to some distant clime. This is your home, you are in your school boy days, learning a little every day. May we continue to learn through the unmeasurable entries of the future, and find that happiness which can only come from honest motives and manly endeavour.

SPEAKING MEDIUMSHIP.

M. Alexandre Vincent, one of the contributors to our contemporary, *Le Spiritisme* (Paris), continues his correspondence with the "Docteur incredule." His last letter treats of "Speaking Mediumship;" he says:—

"This is one of the most remarkable phenomena met with in the study of Spiritualism. What is said by spirits through mediums varies much in quality, due sometimes to the former, sometimes, from defectiveness of one kind or other, to the latter. Mediums are entranced more or less deeply when they are thus used; the entrancement is a preliminary condition. The controlling action of the spirit may be imperfect, or it may be so complete that it might be regarded almost as a temporary incarnation; through some peculiar sensitiveness of the medium's nervous system the spirit seems, in such cases, so completely to possess himself of his organs, presents such characteristics of individuality, that the medium's own personality seems quite effaced.

"The possibility is suggested by you, as it has been by many others, of such persons playing a part, but playing such parts would require a perfection of high histrionic

art, of which these persons, these mediums, are known not to be the fortunate possessors. I have been present when one of them has passed through seven or eight entrancements; the control of one spirit ceasing, the medium has lapsed into a state of complete passivity, to rise presently under that of another, each in succession manifesting a totally different character and individuality. I remember once, at the commencement of a seance, the medium passing under the control of a spirit whose influence induced a kind of epileptic fit, and this, passing off through a magnetiser present breathing upon the medium's epigastrium, another spirit controlled him, and gave an instructive explanation of the incident. One plays for diversion or profit; there was neither in this case to the medium.

"Remember that all those phenomena are presenting themselves wherever Spiritualism is investigated. Is it to be supposed that a great number of persons, foreign to each other, in all quarters of the globe, could arrange for so extensive a mystification of this kind?"

"Then comes your suggestion that if not 'playing a part' it may be hallucination. But I would ask you what kind of hallucination is that in which the subjects of it exhibit enviable powers of sustained and elevated reasoning?"

"No, the simplest, easiest, and most rational conclusion one can arrive at from a consideration of the facts is that spirits of those gone before manifest themselves thus, and communicate with us. Such is the representation that they themselves make, and it is confirmed by their furnishing verifiable particulars of their personality and history."

MAGNETISING INANIMATE OBJECTS.

Herr Wiesendanger, a surgeon of Hamburg, writes to *Licht mehr Licht* that he made the acquaintance a few years ago of an honest workman, whom he found possessed of a clear intellect and a strong desire for knowledge, and to whom he introduced the subjects of Spiritualism and magnetism. His new disciple made some good cures by magnetising; but about them there was a singularity. After the first few magnetisations the patients had vomiting, after which the cures advanced rapidly. At spiritualist seances his presence was proved to be so unfavourable to the evolution of phenomena that he ceased to attend them, reserving his studies entirely to magnetism.

"Last Christmas," to quote from Herr W.'s letter, "he came after a long absence, and said that he had been experimenting upon inanimate objects—wands, canes, umbrellas, &c. He could not, he said, repeat any of his experiments then, for he was not in the right condition; his capability was intermitting.

"He came a fortnight afterwards, and we witnessed a phenomenon of so singular a kind that I engaged him to reproduce it, if possible, before a few scientific friends. He agreed.

"At the appointed time he came. All being arranged, he received a walking cane from one of us, turned his face from us, in order, he said, to avoid abstraction of his attention; then having given the cane a vigorous rubbing with his hands, he rested its end on the floor and with his fingers supported it at an angle of 20 or 30 degrees; having concentrated his gaze upon it for some seconds, he withdrew his fingers, and the cane remained standing in its oblique position; continuing his gaze, he slowly drew back, making energetic drawing passes, and the cane followed him with a continuous tremulous movement.

"The experiment was repeated several times in the course of the evening. A penholder on the table also followed, with little jerking movements, the direction given to it by his will."

Since then Herr W. reports,—and his report is confirmed by other letters from Hamburg,—that the phenomenon has been produced before many persons, and is exciting attention among the scientific. The editor of *Licht mehr Licht* concludes: "The record of objects charged with vital magnetism, moving without contact of the magnetiser, is a very long one, and is well-known to all students of magnetism, and it might be made a great deal longer. The question interesting to us is—how far the agents—the visible agents—power as magnetisers is complicated with some power in them as mediums. We are convinced that Spiritualism, in one of its divisions, and magnetism are branches of one science. A comparative study of spiritual and magnetic phenomena would throw light upon each other, and would enable us to solve certain obscure problems in mediumship. It would also afford additional light to those who at present do not see cause enough to attribute mediumistic facts to anything but some unconscious operations of a 'Psychic force.'"

"UNCONSCIOUS MEDIUMSHIP."

The following extracts from the life of the celebrated Charlotte Bronte, by the late Mrs. Gaskell, will supplement Miss Theobald's article bearing the above title.

It is interesting to find this testimony borne to the truth of "inspirational theory" of literary composition by one of our most highly imaginative and popular female novelists.

Hears a Spirit Voice Speaking in Verse.

"She (Charlotte Bronte) told me ('Mary,' her early school-friend) that one night, sitting alone, she heard a voice repeat these lines:—

'Come, thou high and holy feeling.
Shine o'er mountain, flit o'er wave,
Gleam like light o'er dome and shieling.'

"There were eight or ten more lines, which I forget. She insisted that she had not made them; that she had heard a voice repeat them. It is probable that she had read them and unconsciously recalled them. They are not in the volume of poems which the Sisters published."

Mode of Composition.

"I remember many little particulars which Miss Bronte gave me," says Mrs. Gaskell, "in answer to my inquiries respecting her mode of composition. She said that it was not every day that she could write. Sometimes weeks and even months elapsed before she felt that she had anything to add to that portion of her story which was already written. Then some morning she would wake up, and the progress of her tale lay clear and bright before her in distinct vision."

Of the composition of "Villette," Miss Bronte thus writes to her publishers: "It is not likely that my book will be ready at the time you mention. If my health is spared, I shall get on with it as fast as is consistent with its being done, if not well, yet as well as I can do it. Not one whit *faster*. When the mood leaves me (it has left me now, without vouchsafing so much as a word or a message when it will return), I put by the MS. and wait till it comes back again. God knows, I sometimes have to wait long—very long. . . . However, I can but do my best, and then muffle my head in the mantle of Patience, and sit down at her feet and wait." Mrs. Gaskell observes that at such times when she could not write "She could not see her people nor hear them speak; a great mist of head-ache had blotted them out; they were non-existent to her."

Inspiration During Sleep.

"I asked her," writes Mrs. Gaskell, "whether she had ever taken opium, as the description given of its effects in 'Villette' was so exactly like what I had myself experienced—vivid and exaggerated presence of objects, of which the outlines were indistinct or lost in golden mist," &c. She replied that she had never to her knowledge taken a grain of it in any shape—but that she had followed the process she always adopted when she had to describe anything which had not fallen within her own experience: she had thought intently on it for many and many a night before falling to sleep—wondering what it was like, or how it would be—till at length, some time after the progress of her story had been arrested at this one point for weeks, she awakened up in the morning with all clear before her, as if she had in reality gone through the experience, and then would describe it word for word as it had happened. I cannot account for this psychologically; I only am sure that it was so because she said it."

PAINLESS SURGERY.—Dr. Chazaraïn sends the following note to *Spiritisme* (Paris): "Madame D.'s nursemaid Julie came to me suffering from neuralgia. I discovered that it arose from some decayed teeth, and told her they would have to be extracted. She required a little time to think about that. Returning home, her mistress thought of magnetism and made passes over the face; this gave relief but it did not last. In the course of the day, Madame D., who is a medium, received a communication from her guides to the effect that Julie's teeth might be extracted without pain if she were put to sleep, and that they would help. Madame D. sent a note to me informing me of this, and asked me to appoint some hour next day for performing the operation. I appointed the hour and went accordingly. Julie was ready, and after a few moments' application of Madame D.'s hands to her face passed into the somnambulant sleep, during which she answered questions and observations quite well. I removed three teeth without her flinching, and at my leisure arrested a considerable bleeding from the disrupted vessels by applying perchloride of iron. During the whole time Julie gave no sign of pain or uneasiness, and when she was awakened she evidently knew nothing of what had passed."

THE DIVINING ROD.

There are few unexplained phenomena more remarkable than the peculiar "gift" which certain people seem to possess of discovering a subterranean well by the aid of a branch of the common willow. Those who possess this gift are so few that one might be inclined to think that the phenomenon is merely an illusion, but several recent examples have shewn that this is not the case. We are, for instance, informed among others on the most reliable authority that there is a man living at present in the parish of Hultojö, near Jönköping, in Sweden, who has on several occasions demonstrated that he possesses the gift in question. The gift has thus on many occasions been called into request by farmers desirous to obtain water from subterranean wells.

The proceedings are very simple. The person who possesses the gift provides himself with a willow branch with three sprigs, which he grasps firmly with both hands in such a manner that one of the sprigs points upwards. With the branch in this position he walks over the ground where water is wanted. When approaching the spot where the well is situated a peculiar trembling of the willow branch occurs; it begins to twist and crack in the carrier's hands, and when on the actual spot where the well is, the sprig pointed upwards immediately bends to the earth. The distance between the spot where the trembling of the branch began and where the sprig struck, indicates the depth at which the well will be found. If borings are effected in this spot water will most certainly be found.

If the above-quoted example was all that existed in support of this strange phenomenon, a great deal of doubt might still attach to the belief in its existence. We find, however, that at a recent meeting of the Scientific Association of Christiania, which is constituted of the most learned Norwegian scientists of every branch, the phenomenon formed the lecture of the well-known Professor Lockman, of the Christiania University, undoubtedly the most distinguished physiologist Norway can boast of, who not only expressed his belief in the existence of such a gift, but stated that he himself possessed it. He had not formerly believed in the same until he discovered that he possessed this peculiar gift, which he had over and over again tested by experimenting on the subterranean water conductor at his country house. He could, however, give no explanation of the cause of the phenomenon, and he, therefore, urged that the Association should effect experiments with such persons who were shewn beyond doubt to possess the same gift, which would, perhaps, in time explain its cause. He himself thought that the phenomenon was of a physiological nature, and of similar character to that of certain metals exercising a peculiar influence over certain individuals. Professor Mourad, an eminent *confrère*, believed the phenomenon to be of a psychological nature, and might be referred to those termed "presentiments." Professor Schiötz did not consider it to be of a physical nature.

The existence of the phenomenon has thus been asserted beyond doubt. It would be a matter of great interest to unravel its nature.

C. S.

The third part of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research* is now out and may be obtained at this office.

Spiritualism does not seek to undermine religion, or to render obsolete the teachings of Christ. On the contrary, it points out and leads by a scientific method thereto. It can evidence, illustrate, and confirm His work and words. In an age when faith is weak and hard pressed by Science, it can testify by actual knowledge, and render certain what to many minds had become doubtful. It does not ask a Christian to disbelieve his Bible, but only to understand it. It can help him when his knowledge of the original tongues, however profound, affords him no satisfactory aid; and it is only Modern Spiritualism that can bring many statements into the region of fact.

A GHOSTLY NARRATIVE COMMUNICATED BY A. M. H. W.

HOW SAM BOUGH CROSSED A HAUNTED HILL.

May, 1882.—My cousin, Mrs. James Macdonell, communicated to me this experience of the late well-known Scotch landscape painter, as related to her by himself. Sam Bough's life was full of strange adventure as quaint and original as himself. This incident must have occurred during the earlier period of his career. I have endeavoured, as nearly as possible, to reproduce each word as I heard it.

Sam Bough had been hard at work with some men lading a vessel with ballast somewhere on the northern coast. It was evening; Sam Bough and his companions were tired with their hard labour, and had some distance to walk to the public-house where they were to sleep.

Two roads led to this house. One, the longer way, round the foot of the mountainous hill, the other, much the shorter, across the hill. It was rapidly growing dark. "There's the house across the brow of the hill—there," said Sam Bough to his companions; "what do you mean by taking this lower road?" "We won't cross that hill at dark!" returned the men. "No, not for anything—not we! It's not canny!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" answered Sam Bough, and whistling his dog to follow him, up the hill he went. "We'll see, my friends," said he, "who will first reach the public-house."

"So," said Sam Bough, "up the hill I went, up and up. It grew darker and darker. At length I drew near to a small wood on the hill-side. I began to feel queer. Not that I saw anything, nor that I heard anything—but I felt something! It was very odd! My knees were weak; my breathing was queer. I was queer all over. Still, I was determined that nothing should stop me. I was not afraid of ghost or devil—what was there to fear? I felt queerer and queerer! I burst out into a sweat all over me—a cold sweat. I lifted my hands to my head, and I felt all my hair standing up from my skin. My hair lifted my hat! I looked at my dog. He was hanging his tail between his legs—I could just see that in the dark. I whistled to him, but he turned suddenly round, and fled back again down the hill as fast as he could go. Well, I was very queer. I could scarcely move. But push on I would, all in the sweat as I was. Once through the trees, and across the brow of the hill and beginning to descend on the other side, I was better. My knees were less weak; and gradually the queer feelings passed off.

"I was the first at the inn after all. So soon as I got inside the door, I dropped down into a chair.

"What's come to you, master?" asks an old woman in the room, 'What's come to you?'

"Nothing," said I.

"Hasn't it then!" says the old woman; and she takes down a bit of a broken looking-glass from the chimney-shelf, and shows me my own face in it, white as a sheet.

"You've been through the wood and across the hill!" says she, "there's no mistake in that!" and she runs out and brings me some brandy. And very thankful too I was to drink it," added Sam Bough.

SPRIT TEACHINGS.—A lady writes:—"This book of 'M.A. (Oxon's)' ought to have a wide sale amongst 'inquirers' as well as amongst confirmed Spiritualists, since it is quite a unique book, not from the fact of its automatic production, but from its giving the chronicle of the growth of a highly cultured mind into freedom of the spirit through converse with a spirit. No doubt mental growth is in thoughtful minds usually thus produced, but the process is in this remarkable book unveiled to us."

Now, as in all times past, there are two kinds of Spiritualism—the one lawful, reverent in its attitude, and pre-eminently beneficial in its results; the other unlawful, and as irreverent and baneful. A most clear and marked distinction is drawn between the two—i.e., between necromancy and a lawful communion with the dead. Paul refers to both. While condemning witchcraft and sorcery on the one hand, he extols spiritual gifts on the other, even going so far as to counsel the seeking of the best gifts.

The credentials which Spiritualism has to offer are indisputable facts—facts as hard and stubborn as those which have been deduced from any physical science. The witnesses of these facts are innumerable, and the character of many unimpeachable. Upon this basis we may well be content to rest our *raison d'être*. Spiritualism does not fear inquiry: it has nothing to lose, but everything to gain thereby. All that it desires is a candid and honest method of investigation, and not a rough and ready mode of settlement, as too many scientists, unfortunately for themselves, have adopted.

TEMPORARY OFFICES OF "LIGHT."

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Light:

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4TH, 1883.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

REVIEWS.

SPIRIT TEACHINGS. By "M.A. (Oxon);" Author of "Psychography," "Spirit Identity," "Higher Aspects of Spiritualism," &c., &c. London: The Psychological Press Association, 38, Great Russell-street, W.C., and E. W. Allen, 4, Ave Maria-lane. 1883. 10s. 6d.

SECOND NOTICE.

We now turn to consider the philosophy, together with the varied subject-matter which form the contents of the book.

Its philosophy may be more justly termed a lofty Theism than that which ordinarily would be understood as constituting the philosophy of orthodox Christianity.

The Christ as, through His own words, He is revealed to us in the Gospel as the Holy Anointed-One, is upheld throughout these "Teachings" with reverence and beauty. He is consistently manifested as the perfect and lovely ideal of Humanity—the Man-Divine, after whose full stature of beauty and grace man must ever aspire. The Christ-life of self-sacrifice, of obedience to the voice of the "in-dwelling" Father, of the strength combined with the gentleness of pure and perfect love, is shewn as "the Way" alone, whereby the children of the New-Life can press on, ever ascending to the Father of the Christ—and their Father; to His God—and their God.

The avowed object, in short, of these writings is, according to "Imperator," to help onward the advent of the time, "when the pure Gospel which Jesus preached shall find its counterpart again on an advanced plane of knowledge." Also to manifest unmistakably that God's "dealings with man have been uniform through the ages, intimate in proportion as man cultivates spirituality, remote as his animal nature asserts itself, and he becomes corporeal and material in his instincts."

From the advertisement in "LIGHT" of the contents of the "Spirit Teachings," the readers will be aware how varied is their character, how wide the horizon embraced by them. Suffice it now, therefore, to summarise the most salient heads—not, perhaps, exactly in sequence as they appear in the book itself, but as they have left impress upon the mind.

The Christ-life, as already observed, is set forth pre-eminently as the earthly and heavenly ideal prepared for each human soul called to enter upon its sublime pilgrimage towards God. The new birth of the soul in varied aspects; the death of materialism and literalism, both in doctrine and life, are manifested as the great work now being wrought by the Holy Spirit—and this through the agency of messenger-spirits: esoteric and exoteric aspects of truth considered: the symbolic aspect of the Christ-life and mission, and its relation to Life and Law-Spiritual: also the symbolism of Revelation and Nature. The means employed by the Messenger-spirits to enlighten and instruct man, the difficulties to be encountered by them, and also by psychical persons who come into communication with supernal influence. Realm of

the Antagonists: conflicts with the Antagonists: the issues for good resulting from these conflicts of ever-renewed antagonism. Error and sin; terrible evils which the unregenerate man draws to himself, here, and hereafter, when he ignores, runs counter-to, or wilfully breaks the true Divine laws of his being—self-renunciation, love, harmony, peace, and union with the indwelling spirit of the universal Parent-God. Conditions of varied classes of unhappy disembodied spirits, shewing in what really consists the state, called by the orthodox believers "Hell"—the hell of spiritual purgation from evils. What spirits teach regarding "Judgment:" literalism of the childhood of man, and of the childhood of faith. Residuum of truth to be discovered in every form of faith and in all creeds. Outlines of various religions. Prayer: its vital reality as a force and its varied uses. Attitude of the world ever against new truth: man's future destiny, &c., &c.

Interspersed amidst these more abstract subjects of speculation and thought, the reader will find contained in the autobiographical prefixes to the sections, various highly noteworthy cases of Spirit-identification, not the least interesting portions of this deeply interesting and instructive volume.

(To be continued.)

A Proposal to Circulate "Spirit Teachings."

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—Will you allow me to make a suggestion with reference to "M.A. (Oxon's)" recently-issued volume of "Spirit Teachings"? It is a book which I believe to be invaluable, and to contain matter specially suitable and useful for these times, when the minds of all thinking men and women are looking for a fresh development of religious truth. It seems to me that it will not only prove of value in indicating to many an earnest seeker the very means of escape from the agnosticism of the day, for which not a few are now looking, but that it will also exercise a very marked influence in disabusing the public mind of the idea that all spirit communications are trivial and worthless. This volume is, at any rate, whatever it may be else, a complete answer on that score.

I would suggest therefore that an effort should be made to circulate copies of this volume in influential quarters where its contents are likely to be appreciated, and to result, in some cases, in their wide diffusion. Amongst those who are chosen to become the recipients, I would recommend clergymen whose views are known to be liberal; the tables of reading-rooms, and the shelves of the numerous libraries scattered over the kingdom. The details of the plan could, I think, be safely left to a committee appointed for the purpose. The book is issued at 10s. 6d. per copy, but on inquiry the publishers have very kindly offered very liberal terms if this suggestion is carried out, and are prepared to supply them at the rate of four copies for £1. I think we should aim at sending out at least 500 copies. The result could hardly fail to lift our cause in public estimation.

Twickenham.

T. H. EDMANDS.

[We think the idea an admirable one, and shall be pleased to start the list with twenty copies. If adopted at all, the scheme should be liberally carried out.—ED. "LIGHT."]

THE SPIRITUAL RECORD. August, 1883. London: E. W. Allen, or Office of LIGHT, 38, Great Russell-street, W.C.; Glasgow: Hay, Nisbet, and Co., 38, Stockwell-street. 6d.

In the number before us, Dr. Nichols continues his article on "Direct Spirit Drawings and Writings," copious fac-similes illustrating the text. Then follows "Testimony of Two Earls of Dunraven," dealing principally with the now well-known records of "Experiences" printed, in the first instance, for Private Circulation only. "Materialism" also, like the two preceding papers by Dr. Nichols, deals with the points of difference between the Materialistic Cosmology, and the Spiritualistic Cosmology, the difficulties of the former, and the solutions given by the latter. A case of "Spirit Identity," first related by Mrs. Watts to "M. A. (Oxon)," is reproduced with additional evidence from the narrator's diary, and "Signor Damiani's Message," together with an article on "The Second Light and the usual Notes," completes a number singularly rich in narrations of facts.

MR. HUSK'S SEANCES.—We are requested to remind the members of the C. A. S. that subscription seances are held with this medium every Thursday evening at eight p.m., at the rooms of the Association, 38, Great Russell-street. Tickets for admission, 2s. 6d. each, application for which should be made to Mr. T. Blyton, 6, Truro Villa, Station-road, Church End, Finchley, N., or at 38, Great Russell-street, W.C.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[It is preferable that correspondents should append their names and addresses to communications. In any case, however, these must be supplied to the Editor as a guarantee of good faith.]

Speculative Philosophy.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—“Now the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” With the instinctive reverence of humanity for what is called the Supernatural, it is not surprising that many investigators of Spiritualism should have been ready to accept doctrines coming to them across the river of Death, and we find that men whose intellects are too powerful and too discriminative to accept the doctrines of the New Testament, and what they call the absurdities in the Bible, consent, on the most slender and shadowy evidence, to receive and publish doctrines and systems possessing far less antecedent probability than must be allowed for Christianity, and which, though of great antiquity, can shew through the long course of ages no such results on the progress of humanity as can be clearly traced to Christian teaching. In this day, when we can see abundant fulfilment of the prophecy “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,” have we not also evidence that the stone, cut out without hands, has long since smitten the image, now being carried away, and has become a mountain, giving even at the present time signs of its filling the whole earth?

The great feature of Christianity, as of its precursor Judaism, is its appeal to a personal God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Regulator of life in all its forms, who is Himself accessible to all that seek Him in the right spirit, and is ready to answer their prayers. Happiness is attained by working in submission to His will, made known to us by Him. He has allowed us, in our own wills, to take on ourselves the government of the world, with results of which we have no reason to be proud, but men are gradually coming to understand that His will is better for them than their own, and all must learn to do His will, not in blind, but intelligent submission, ere happiness can be attained. He who is Almighty and willeth not the death of any, but that all shall return, repent and live, has provided the way for all to learn this, and ultimately to reach the rest for the people of God, a condition much misconceived by the theorists who tell us of absorption into the Deity, or of Nirvana.

One charge brought against Christians is that they are Anthropomorphologists. Some Christians might deny the impeachment, but I count it a boast of Christianity, and maintain the view that one of the senses of the declaration, “God made man in His own image,” extends to the outward form, though I readily admit that the most important meaning of the passage is its declaration of the similarity of our spiritual being to that of its Creator, of whom we are truly the children. In this all Christians will agree. This doctrine was a distinctive peculiarity of the Hebrew revelation, and, be it remembered, it ran counter to the ideas of the Semitic race, who deified flies, serpents, fishes, &c., as well as the heavenly bodies; also to those of the Aryan Orientals, whose deities were provided with fifty hands, three or four heads, or, like Ganesa, wearing the head of an elephant. It was also opposed to the Hamitic views of deities, for these were, like Anubis or Ptah, made with the heads of the lower animals, though this race also worshipped gods of human shape. The Greeks, on the other hand, recognising instinctively that the human figure is the most beautiful form in creation, represented all their gods as of human shape, and herein set up a standard similar to that of the Christian, in that the perfections of Deity differed from those of humanity, not in kind, but in degree. Thus they encouraged men to look up to the gods and aim at their perfections.

Coming further westward, it is interesting to look at the teaching of the Druids in these islands 2,000 years ago, condensed by Robert Southey into the following passage from “*Madoc*” :—

“Thee, Lord! he sang—
O, Father, Thee, whose wisdom—Thee, whose power,
Whose love—all love, all power, all wisdom. Then!
Tongue cannot utter, nor can heart conceive.
He, in the lowest depth of Being framed
The imperishable mind: in every change,
Through the great circle of progressive life,
He guides and guards, till evil shall be known,
And being known as evil, cease to be:
And the pure soul, emancipate by Death,
The Enlarger, shall attain its end pre-destined
The eternal newness of eternal joy.”

This passage may be amplified and explained by the following extracts from the “*Bardic Triads*” :—

“There are three circles of existence;—the circle of Infinity, where there is nothing but God, of living or dead, and none but God can traverse it; the circle of Inchoation where all things are by nature derived from death—this circle hath been traversed by man; and the circle of Happiness where all things spring from life,—this man shall traverse in Heaven.”

“Animated beings have three states of existence;—that of Inchoation in the great deep, or lowest point of existence; that of liberty in the state of humanity; and that of love, which is happiness in Heaven.”

“All animated beings are subject to three necessities;—beginning in the great deep; progression in the circle of Inchoation; and plenitude in the circle of Happiness. Without these things nothing can possibly exist but God.”

“Three things are necessary in the circle of Inchoation,—the least of all, animation, and thence beginning; the material of all things, and thence increase, which cannot take place in any other state; the formation of all things out of the dead mass, and thence discriminate individuality.”

“Three things cannot but exist towards all animated beings from the nature of Divine justice: co-sufferance in the circle of Inchoation, because without that no one could attain to the perfect knowledge of anything; co-participation in the Divine love; and co-ultimity from the nature of God’s power, and its attributes of justice and mercy.”

“There are three necessary occasions of Inchoation: to collect the materials and properties of every nature; to collect the knowledge of every thing; and to collect power towards subduing the adverse and the devastative, and for the diverta-tion of evil. Without this traversing every mode of animated existence, no state of animation or of any thing in nature, can attain to plenitude.”

“By the knowledge of three things will all evil and death be diminished and subdued; their nature, their cause, and their operation. This knowledge will be obtained in the circle of Happiness.”

“The three excellencies of changing the mode of existence in the circle of happiness—acquisition of knowledge; beautiful variety; and repose, from not being able to endure uniform Infinity and uninterrupted Eternity.”

“Three things none but God can do: endure the eternities of the circle of Infinity; participate of every state of existence without changing; and reform and renovate every thing without the loss of it.”

“The three plenitudes of Happiness:—Participation of every nature, with a plenitude of one predominant; conformity to every cast of genius and character, possessing superior excellence in One; the love of all beings and existences, but chiefly concentrated in one object, which is God; and in the predominant One of each of these will the plenitude of Happiness consist.”

This is a system which very closely resembles that underlying the Hebrew Revelation.

In this day of speculative inquiry men are no longer satisfied to sit down and allow others to think for them, and it is far better that minds should live and think, though at times led away by error, than that they should remain in a state of somnolent acceptance, even of what may by chance be right. I have no desire to arrest study, or even speculation, but to call attention to the foundations of the various superstructures offered as solutions of the great problem of existence. It is a satisfactory and highly instructive feature of most of these theories advanced at the present day that so far as concerns their practical application to this earthly phase of existence, they generally converge pretty nearly to the one point, agreeing with the teaching of the Founder of Christianity, which is love to all mankind.

The theory of Re-incarnation which was principally held by continental Spiritualists, appears to be spreading in England as well as in America, notwithstanding that there is little to support it, save dogmatic assertion, much of it coming, no doubt, from the other side of the river, but certainly not on that account to be relied upon. Certain facts and analogies are, indeed, advanced to support it; but these are all explicable fully as clearly, and in most cases much more readily, in accordance with the Christian system, and there is absolutely no evidence, philosophical or logical, which has yet been offered in proof of Re-incarnation. It must be admitted that evidence to disprove it is but scanty, but the propounder of a theory, like the suitor for the recovery of an estate, cannot obtain credence on the weak-

ness of his opponent's case ; he can only succeed from the strength of his own.

The latest development of the theory of Re-incarnation has come to us from its birthplace, and is worthy of its Hindoo origin, being strikingly suggestive of the same class of mind that could count its gods by the lakh and represent the saints as arriving at perfection through such exercises as standing on the tip of one toe for 500 years, or sitting for a few centuries on the point of a spike. The propounders of this theory, oddly enough, style themselves Theosophists, though denying the existence of the Theos, a personal Deity. Judging from the letters of "A. P. S.," which have appeared in "LIGHT," Theosophy admits some creative power, not very clearly defined, but which seems to be a principle inherent in something. This power, styled Akasa, though impersonal, has by its action produced spirits with personal identities, but having started them, as well as the rest of creation, ceases to interfere further, leaving all to develop according to immutable laws, of which we are not told that there has been any lawgiver. Under these laws the spirits take upon themselves material clothing, time after time, with intervals of dreaming, until, ultimately, Nirvana is reached. It seems that each of us has to inhabit, in succession, seven planets, performing in each seven rounds of existence, each round consisting of seven races. Each race, in its turn, consists of seven subdivisional races, and each subdivisional race of seven branch races, through all of which we have to pass seven times. This gives us a grand total of 103,649 successive material bodies to be inhabited. After each successive incarnation or Karma, the spirit passes into a pleasant dream or period of Devachan, in which he surrounds himself with whatever he likes best, and may have the company of those whom he most desires, though they themselves might be elsewhere enjoying themselves with others, or performing their next Karma, or even have been for their own demerits, annihilated. These periods of Devachan vary from a few years to several hundred years of our time in length, according to the merits of the previous Karma, and the spirit, after enjoying this dream as a reward, goes into a fresh body, in which he advances further, but has also to make propitiation for the sins committed in his former material clothing. I am not concerned to deny the possibility of these theories, but to me it appears most unreasonable and improbable that after a man has spent fifty or sixty years in doing good to his fellow creatures, much of this consisting, it may be, in affording them aids to their spiritual growth, his best reward should be an unsubstantial dream in which he obtains neither knowledge nor strength, instead of that promotion, typified by Christ as having dominion over ten cities, to a sphere in which his powers are strengthened by still working in a higher employment of his energies, to carry on the purposes of his Creator. It further seems to me most unreasonable that after the enjoyment of his reward, he should simply go back pretty nearly to where he had left off, and take up a fresh round of life, burdened with the sins committed in his cast-off body. The ultimate reward, Nirvana, is also, in my view, thoroughly irrational, for it seems that we are to sink into a sort of nothingness, in which we shall have nothing more to do, and nothing more to learn. It is a purely finite conception, traceable, as it seems to me, to minds engaged in watching the operations of nature, and especially in tracing the analogies of insect life, and applying them to the soul, a favourite study of Orientals, whence came the symbolic representation of the soul as a butterfly. The hibernations of vegetable life, followed by the not infrequent cases of the peculiar imperfections of the last year's growth being reflected in the growth of its successor, would have afforded further aid in the development of this theory, which is as clearly earth-born and earth-tinctured as if its framers had spent their time in culling "simples, with a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glories of the stars." It bears upon its face and in its details the aspect, not of a revelation of truth, but a conception of finite, not to say puerile minds, continued in its elaboration of details by intellects not yet sufficiently advanced to perceive the pettiness and childishness of their ideas. It is introduced to us with a flourish of authority, and no more confident claim has been advanced by any prophet, apostle, or pope, than is made by "A. P. S." for the authority of the Occult Brothers in India, from whom he has received this new revelation. I am by no means unwilling to allow to these brothers the possession of remarkable mediumistic powers, even were they such as Belwer represented Zanon as possessing, but I have yet to learn that the possession of these powers is a guarantee of perfect wisdom, or even of accurate knowledge in spiritual matters. I have never been able to see that miracles

are the strongest proof of the truth of Christianity, and have always thought it a remarkably weak point in the writings of so able a logician as the late Archbishop Whately, that he should have stated this. I think the strongest rational or philosophic evidence of the truth of the Holy Scriptures is the fulfilment of prophecy, and that from what is fulfilled we have just grounds for believing in the fulfilment of the rest.

With regard to the revelations of those who have been favoured to view the spiritual world, we have all, within the past twenty years, learned enough to warn us against any hasty acceptance of their accounts. We know well how the character and ideas of the medium tincture the understanding of spiritual things. We have had revelations from spirits of all kinds ; communications have been received from Jews, Mahomedans, Buddhists, Atheists, and even of a denial of continued existence, for at least one case has occurred where the communicating spirit denied that there was any future existence after the death of the physical body, and asserted itself to be the spirit of one of those present in the flesh. We have nothing to do but to cultivate communion in a given direction, and we may readily become fooled to the top of our bent. These Occult Brothers are set forth by "A. P. S." as "the heirs of all the ages in the foremost files of time," and he says that for more centuries than he dares tell about, the accumulation of this occult knowledge has continued. Now, knowing what we do of Spiritualism, and a few centuries are nothing in the spirit-world, it is easy to understand the perpetuation and elaboration of the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis by the spirits of those who held it on earth communicating with their former disciples. I have the highest respect for Emmanuel Swedenborg ; but I do not, therefore, accept as gospel all that he thought he saw in the spirit-world, and I do not see that the claims of the Adept Brothers are, so far as has been yet shewn, at all so strong as those of Swedenborg. Are they better than those of St. Paul, who tells us that he was caught up to the third heaven ; or than those of St. John revealed in the Apocalypse ? These theories of the future cannot be received on the dictation of any man. They must be tried by the one test, set forth in the oldest book which exists, in these words—"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." We must bring all these theories and revelations to this test, and accept or reject them according to its dictates, not merely as to their general scope, but in all particulars. We have all access to this unerring monitor. The remarkable theory of Mr. F. F. Cook, of Chicago, that our spirits are embodied piecemeal in successive incarnations, so that we ultimately become groups of successive identities, is amusing, and needs no further reference, though I fully recognise the true Christian spirit displayed in his letters as well as that they contain much that is worthy of consideration.

I need not again travel over the ground worked by Dr. G. Wyld, to whom we are all much indebted for his remarks on Occult Buddhism ; but I may repeat that the teachers of this doctrine can point to no great results from it during the many centuries of its existence. There are giants who stand out as landmarks in history, for whose achievements neither creeds nor nations have any real claim to honour. Their greatness belongs to humanity at large, but no creed or philosophy can shew such results on the masses of mankind as are distinctly traceable, especially in these latter days, to Christianity, from which have sprung all the great educational and philanthropic movements now working with it, in elevating mankind from the condition of disjointed, selfish beings, into one already approaching to a vast brotherhood. Judaism among its own race did, to a large extent, accomplish this result, and art and science were promoted by the Greeks and the Arabians ; but nothing like true or comprehensive ideas of liberty, love, and philanthropy have been ever developed save through Christianity. "A. P. S." and most of those who write on religion, are constantly making the same mistake as runs through all the arguments of Bradlaugh. They confound theology and pulpit-teaching with Christianity, instead of looking into the New Testament to find out what Christianity is. And though the New Testament is supposed to be the basis of these teachings, and of theology, it will often be found to differ much from them.

I cannot conceive how Akasa, a principle inherent in something, or nothing, or a power analogous to motion or magnetism, could evolve conscious identities and start them on unerring rounds of millions of ages through their 100,000 incarnations, with the intervals of Devachan ; and I cannot imagine a wise

almighty, and beneficent Creator so poor in resource as to have no training for the spirit but these endless rounds. There are none of these philosophies into which much that belongs to the Christian scheme might not be made to fit with skilful reasoning; but such arguments work both ways, and I take Nirvana, as well as the doctrine of the absorption into the Deity, to be a misconception of the Christian view, which is much more nearly approached in the Bardic Triads. The true Nirvana is attained when the spirit has come to see, beyond any doubt, that the will of God is better than his own; to submit himself, not blindly, but with rational conviction, to the will of his Creator, and to work in full unity with Him. This is the condition of rest, not in a quiescent and idle state, but of full understanding that the spirit is working with the Creator, and that therefore his work is efficient. He that has reached this state fulfils the prayer of Christ Jesus, "that they may be one even as we are One. I in them and they in Me, that they may be perfected into one"; and this, without any loss of distinct identity, is what has been misunderstood as absorption into the Deity.

This condition, moreover, though it may be difficult of attainment, can be reached even while in the body, and the Apostle Paul, although he speaks of himself with modesty, "not as though I had already attained," had evidently begun to enter into it. And here we have further the evidence of the attainment of Jesus, the Anointed, and His thorough rest in the will of His Father. He says, "He that believeth on Me hath" (not shall have) "Eternal Life."

Seers trained in these Buddhist doctrines are exactly those from whom we might well expect the accounts of Devachan, and these afford strong evidence of their want of exalted spiritual perception. Devachan is evidently the state of spirits enveloped each in his own earth sphere, a condition very likely to endure for a long period with a Buddhist dreamer, as well as to be so dense as to admit light with the utmost difficulty. The subjective surroundings of what they have taken with them from earth, and their carelessness of aught further, are strong proofs of this.

All the so-called Rational schemes, Agnosticism, Deism, Platonism, &c., as well as these Buddhism revelations, lack the power of appealing to human nature, and, whatever may be said to the contrary, human nature, from the earliest flint-chipper to the present day, and from the Andaman islander even to exalted spirits, remains much the same. Among men have always been a few philosophers given to abstract and abstruse speculations, but their recondite theories have never taken hold save among a few even of their disciples, for to the bulk of humanity they have no meaning. The masses cannot be moved save by the appeal to a personal God, and in the Christian plan we can trace the finger of Him who "knew what was in man." No mean evidence of the truth of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament is its being so readily intelligible to all who will receive it "as a little child." Christ came to direct us to the Father, and the Comforter sent by Him to teach us comes to all who seek Him aright.

"In vain Thy creatures testify of Thee,
'Till Thou proclaim Thyself. Thine is indeed
A teaching voice; but 'tis the praise of Thine,
That whom It teaches, It makes prompt to learn.
And with the boon gives talents for its use."

H. T. HUMPHREYS.

Kennington.

Esoteric Buddhism.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—I should be glad to say a few words in reference to the letter from "G. W., M.D.," in your issue of July 21st. Perhaps some of your readers may not object to a criticism on this letter from a European, though I will not add arithmetical standpoint also. By esoteric, I maintain that the word simply implies the inner meaning, as applied to the outer signification. It does not mean the sacred innermost; there is, of course, no word for that. Esoteric Buddhism means simply the non-illusory version of Buddhist doctrine as compared with the illusory side. Just as Esoteric Christianity means, I conclude "G. W." would consider, the non-illusory version of it understood by the few compared to the illusory version of it, which is the creed of the many, necessarily changing with each generation. The non-illusory or esoteric teaching tells us that the Psalmist plainly said that "We cannot, by searching, find out God." The Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures does not in this esoteric teaching take the place of the First Cause, spoken of by "G. W."

Can he prove that his Jehovah exists, and is the First Cause? if not, he is as atheistic as the esoteric teaching. This teaching simply widens the mental horizon so indefinitely and infinitely, that finite man is compelled to bow the head, and say the time has not yet arrived for mortal man to dare to define any idea even of God. The lower the idea of God, the easier it is to define Him. The higher one goes, and wider and ever wider grows the conception, but an end comes and inconceivability arises. Enough for us that we have some guardian of our planet, our little planet which is known even astronomically as a speck in the boundless universe. To me there is always something savouring of savagery and of primeval races, this insistence upon our God as the only one and the greatest. What right have we to say so? When in the course of the ages open to every one of us, our horizons widen, doubtless we shall think of our present conceptions of the Deity much as cultured men of the present day look upon the crudest anthropomorphism of early times. There is no Atheism in the assertion that the Brothers do not teach a Personal God; and, moreover, that "no such conception enters into the great esoteric doctrine of Nature." Hitherto, with our imperfect knowledge, we have been in utter confusion respecting our "Gods." For the first time in our history is this mystery cleared up as taught in Esoteric Buddhism. There we learn that we must be silent on subjects of which we know nothing, and that is the First Great Cause, confused by "G. W." with the Jehovah, the Christ of the Bible, and made still more impossible by the teachings of modern theology. The mistake of the mysticism, as understood by "G. W.," is its limitation. It teaches the life and destiny of one individual in one earth-life, no further. It is Esoteric Christianity certainly, and true in its circle, but it does not get out of that circle, the one earth-life of man; whereas, the teaching of Esoteric Buddhism takes in Esoteric Christianity and every truth of science and history, everything in its vast arms, and proclaims, not only the destiny of the individual but the destiny of the race, the cosmogony of the universe. He who runs may read, and the same criticism may be applied to Mr. Sinnett's work as is applied to the Bible by its devoutest believers; they don't know who the authors really were, they simply say, "Its internal evidence is a proof of its authenticity."

I don't find anywhere, though "G. W." does, that we are threatened in any way with punishment for non-belief by the Brothers. This is a singular reading of doctrine, altogether opposed to the idea of arbitrary punishment in any case. We are told certain things; those of us who can receive them, do, and it is better inasmuch as it shews receptibility to higher truths, just as a mathematical problem is received by a student of mathematics as a lucid idea; to a drayman, the problem is not even a problem—it is gibberish; but the drayman is not punished, only the master might blame himself for casting pearls before swine, and offer his problem to a more educated mind.

Now, with regard to what "G. W." says of Koot Hoomi being to blame for not doing this and that and the other, allow me to say "G. W." is to blame in talking about matters of which he is necessarily incapable of judging.

To begin with, "Is it a proved historic fact that the Jesus of the New Testament is an exact historic personage, and that 'G. W.' has an absolute right to claim him as a real historic being whose ways and doings and actions are thoroughly known and understood and truly recorded?" If not, he has no right to draw the comparison. Possibly, if more were known of the Adept, the Rabbi Jeshua or Jasher (I don't know which,) a more correct, not comparison, but parallel might be drawn. As it is, the old adage applies; comparisons are, and always will be, odious.

"G. W." seems always tormented by the word "secrecy." I agree with him it is a hateful word, and should not be used in its ordinary and abused sense. In its proper sense it is not objectionable, and to be the recipient of a secret need not be necessarily unpleasant, yet somehow, the word has an ugly sound. Let us drop it, for it is the word employed, not by those who are in the receipt of knowledge, but by those who want the knowledge and won't work for it. Esoteric wisdom is freely opened to those who seek, and who prove themselves worthy to seek; but it is hidden or veiled from those who sit still and expect to be told everything, for they could not understand. Darwin might have expounded the whole of his system to a navy by the wayside, but it would still be a secret to the navy. Nevertheless, had the navy had some sort of education and some conception of general truths, the mystery would have "some show of reason" to him. All occult doctrine seems

taught in the same way, being truth according to the capacity for receiving it; and as we prove this in ordinary education, why cannot we receive it on higher grounds?

"G. W." has written an exhaustive list of objections, most of them arising, I assume, from ill-digested perusal of the work in question, and also from an unhistorical and unphilosophical comprehension of the effects of Christianity. Ordinary orthodox Christianity would extremely resent any confusion with Unitarianism, and "G. W." should therefore define what his Christianity means, if he allows breadth of views to himself but not to others. Unitarianism is an anathema maranatha to Roman Catholics, Ritualists, as well as to the countless varieties of catechisms long, middle and short of the Scotch Church. Christianity, therefore, being burdened with these ever widening differences of opinion, deserves the name of no doctrine at all. Esoteric Christianity doubtless is the true doctrine for one man and one woman in one short earth-life, but it is reserved for "Esoteric Buddhism" to unfold to us the glorious horizons and the ultimate destiny of man; the first time in history that we have given to us a foundation on which we can raise the superstructure of the science of the future; and on which we can build without fear our hopes for the human race.

ISABEL DE STEIGER, F.T.S.

I should like to add a protest, in which I am sure all Theosophists would join me; and that is against the use of any unparliamentary expressions in writing in "LIGHT" on such important matters, such as "an awful cram," and "mad as a hatter." They should be withdrawn.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—The letter of "G.W.M.D." in your issue of the 21st July is indeed surprising. It is surprising on the following grounds:—(1) That it is the production of a Theosophist at all, and (2) that it should come from the pen of one who has been credited with knowing much, and after all has known so little.

"G. W." begins with an attack on the use made by Mr. Sinnett of the expression "Esoteric Buddhism." His assaults, however, are so puerile that it would be energy mis-spent to undertake a serious repulse.

He then goes on to represent "The Brothers" as so many Papal tyrants forcing their dogmas upon the "enlightened West," just as Frenchmen stuff the Strasburg geese. But we know that it is far otherwise—that their sentiment is "Knock and it shall be opened unto you," or, in the language of Koot Hoomi, "Deserve much and we will prove honest debtors; little, and you need only expect a compensating return."

Mr. Sinnett is not inclined to shirk the question why "The Brothers" do not sport themselves before the Thomases of the ordinary world. On pp. 7 and 8 of the *Occult World* we find the matter openly and fairly argued, and I need only quote one sentence, which, by its suggestiveness, is a complete reply: "Indeed, the reader will not go far in an examination of the nature of the powers which proficient in Occultism actually possess, without seeing that it is supremely desirable," yea, as the present writer has reason to know, absolutely necessary, "to keep back the practical exercise of such powers from the world at large."

"G.W." then goes into arithmetical calculations in a spirit of cheerful pastime, and deals with the human Ego much as school-boys treat their football. He laughs to see it bound, rebound, and bound again. But "The Brothers" put a value on the facts of science in proportion to their moral and philanthropic bearing upon humanity, and whether "G.W." will have 4,802 divisions of existence, or not, is to them and to us a matter of really little consequence.

"G.W.M.D." then goes on to pose as the martyr to virtue. "You must be on the wrong track for truth," he says in effect, "because you do not assert, as I assert, that there is a Personal God." Can it be that we are not so reverent as "G.W." and are sinning daily in our searchings after the Divine? or can it be that we have gone too deep for "G.W.'s" intellect and heart? I humbly prefer to yield an affirmative to the latter. Again I refer to a writing by Koot Hoomi. He says: "If we had the powers of the imaginary personal God, and the universal and immutable laws were but toys to play with, then, indeed, might we have created conditions that would have turned this earth into an Arcadia for lofty souls. But, having to deal with an immutable law, being ourselves its creatures, we have had to do what we could and rest thankful."

"G.W." lays great stress on the spirit of Christianity. "The Brothers" would go much further in this respect than "G.W." It is that spirit which it will be their aim and ours to make universal, and we would close this letter by asking the question: In the lengthy letter of "G.W.M.D." is the aforesaid spirit not conspicuous by its absence?—I am, Sir, yours truly,

W. T. BROWN, F.T.S., Bachelor Legis.

London, 29th July, 1883.

SPIRITUALISM IN LONDON.

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"Human Progress: Its Source." The controls of Mr. Morse introduced their views upon this subject, on Sunday last, by an explanation of the character of the progress. They were thus constrained, with considerate tenderness but fervent zeal, once more to question the literal truthfulness of records which represent man as originally a perfect being, whose fall would be an impeachment of Divine goodness, or wisdom, or power, and to start with the fact of savage nature, which they fitly described, in its relation to human progress, as zero. Hence, by experience and resulting knowledge, a condition was speedily reached which permitted the suggestion that the source of development is threefold. We were urged to recognise it in the sufferings of humanity, in the inspiration of internal light, and in the heart and consciousness of Deity. Suffering is salvation in so many departments of life: pain is mitigated by a pleasurable or beneficent issue in so many ways: the mistakes, darkness and misery of one age have been so commonly the precursors of the liberty and strength of the next: bodies are so clearly strengthened, minds enlarged, affections cultivated under and by trial and struggle, that it is impossible to doubt that progress is born out of suffering. Nor would any Spiritualist traverse the assertion that the intervention of the spirit-world largely influences the growing results also, for besides the very probable fact, advanced as such by the controls, that much of the effort after better things which is due to the healthy, open and earnest thought of the race, at all times, is suggested by the friendly control of the other side, it was judiciously and eloquently maintained that spirits, retaining their recollection of earthly experiences and needs, and finding their own status affected by the activity of their love for their fellows, bring always a completeness of appreciation of the ever varying wants of humanity which is a guarantee for the eventual successful application of means more or less suggested and sustained by themselves. Upon the third head, associating progress with the Deity, the controls, without entering upon detailed analysis of probably conflicting views of first principles, affirmed their own acceptance of the existence of God as of the one supreme, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent source of human unfoldment. That conception, they said, was binding upon them and upon all who received it, and they argued that the power and wisdom involved in the idea, implied, at the least, a measurable expression of the purposes of the Deity in the progress of man. The motives and principles of growth are thus created by an all-wise intervention, stimulated into untiring activity by spiritual co-operation, and sustained and developed by suffering and hope. In a peroration of singular beauty, overflowing with human kindness, we were charged, in our daily lives, to do no discredit to so truly noble a creation as progressive man.

Special attention is directed to the advertisement, on another page, that the evening of Sunday, August 5th, is to be devoted to Question and Answer. Inquiries, under cover and signed, upon subjects of general interest, are invited from all who attend the services of the Lyceum.—S.B.

In Dr. Anna Kingsford's address in our last issue, page 337, column 1, line 24, for *great historical* read *quasi-historical*.

The Rev. Maurice Davies has brought an action for libel against Dr. Williams, of Grahamstown, South Africa, who has been committed for trial on the charge. Altogether, the clergy in our Southern possession do not seem to get along amicably without a head. Bishop Colenso's death having left the Church without a Bishop legally qualified to act in matters of this kind. It would certainly be a Godsend to the cause of religion and peace if Bishop Webb, the newly-elected Bishop of Grahamstown, could see his way to putting an end to the wretched division which now exists.

History is the Newgate Calendar of kings and rulers. It finds no materials in the happiness or virtue of States, and is therefore little better than a record of human crime and misery.

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