

The Question of Great Names. (Page 114)

Light:

A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research.

Edited by **DAVID GOW**

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[Registered as

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CONTENTS.

Notes by the Way	109
A Case of Self-Projection	110
The Bible in the Light of Spiritual Science	111
Evidential	111
The Interlinking of Two Worlds	112
A Direct Voice Sitting	112
The Human Equation	112
Letters to the Editor	113
In the Matter of Great Names	114
The "Phantom Lorry"	114
Sidelights	115
A Spiritualist Lecturer's Experiences in America	116
Testimonial to Mr. W. H. Evans	117
Rays and Reflections	117
Answers to Questions	118
Notes on New Books	118

NOTES BY THE WAY.

THE SIEVE OF TIME.

We have more than once alluded to the way in which in the process of the years the things false and unworthy are tested and rejected and only that which is true and good survives. In an article on the subject the *Two Worlds* has some candid comments on "the flood of communications which profess to come from the spirit world", as thus:

Many of them are due to pure delusion, many to human vanity. Many are doubtless due to subconscious activity on the part of those who imagine they are mediums, and many to the zeal of the individual who is a natural reformer; having caught a new vision, he imagines that he has been specially raised up by God Almighty to put the world right. Do not let us be led into the mistake of supposing that this is merely a modern activity. It has existed as long as man has been man. A huge mass of drivel issued in the name of religion in the ages which have passed has been relegated into the limbo of forgotten things, but the best has survived. Despite persecution, despite opposition, and despite human ignorance, it has been impossible to kill that which was true and that which was worthy.

THE PERVERSE ELEMENT IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

While advanced Spiritualists, in their various bodies for propaganda, demonstration, research and public instruction, are making tremendous headway in every direction by reason of their life and energy and enterprise, it is apparent that the Psychical Research of the old school is rapidly falling into decay. A tradition of nescience and scepticism cannot be carried on indefinitely. That ignorant and contemptuous hostility to psychic facts which once characterised the general attitude is rapidly passing away; it only remains now entrenched in quarters presumed to represent Psychical Research in a scientific way. Some of us have long observed the negative and destructive utterances put forward in the name of this kind of Psychical Research, but have treated them as of little importance—it was so clear that the writers were raw and inexperienced, or they

could never have shown such an utterly sceptical attitude towards phenomena which, to the trained Spiritualist, are matters of everyday experience and observation. It seemed hardly worth while to combat the ignorance and ineptitude shown. It clearly showed that this school of thought—if thought it can be called—had reached a state of deliquescence. No institution can flourish on a policy of perverse negation of proven facts. Investigators who are contemptuous of the material which they profess to investigate present rather a pitiful spectacle.

THE CURSE OF THE PHARAOHS.

The "curse of the Pharaohs" and the long succession of fatalities amongst those associated with the desecration (as some consider it) of the tomb of Tutank-Amen has raised once more in acute form the question of the reality of the "curse" pronounced by the magicians and priests of Ancient Egypt. Confining our attention to this particular instance the first question to be settled is whether (in the words of the Latin tag) the deaths happened not only "after this", but "because of this". That is a matter of opinion, and we find many people who on the evidence are strongly disposed to believe that they came as a consequence and not in the ordinary train of events. We have the facts, but if there were any occult causes there seems to be no clear proof of their existence. We have before given our views on the general question, viz., that curses may carry a certain psychological power. It is possible to harm people by wishing them ill and to benefit them by one's good wishes, provided always that at the back of the wishes there is a potency of will. But experience teaches us that there must be some mental or psychic association between the "transmitter" and the "receiver" so to speak. If the person cursed, for example, believes that harm may befall him as a result of the "ill-wishing", then a breach is made and the evil may result. The mind holds the key to the position; it is the master of the situation so long as it does not resign that mastery. Blessings and curses are alike inoperative where the subject of them is indifferent and incredulous. But it is quite possible to receive all the benefits of a blessing and resist all the maleficence of a curse where the mind is conscious of no evil, desiring to bless and be blessed and to do harm to none either by ordinary or by occult means.

MR. EVAN POWELL ADDRESSES THE L.S.A.

On Thursday evening, 27th ulto., Mr. Evan Powell addressed a crowded audience at 16, Queensberry Place, giving "Answers to Questions". Mrs. Elizabeth Ford presided. We hope to give in next issue a summary of his answers to some of the questions put by members of the audience. Mr. Powell combines a remarkable physical mediumship with trance-speaking, and is greatly esteemed not only as a Medium but as a man of sterling character who, with few or no educational advantages—he was working as a Welsh miner in his boyhood—has gained reputation and respect throughout the Spiritualist movement.

A CASE OF SELF-PROJECTION.

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SOUL INCARNATE.

By J. DESVARREUX-LARPENITEUR (Paris).

One is so habituated to the notion of discarnate spirits manifesting themselves in the seance room that it is for some of us a little startling to find evidence that such manifestations may be produced by persons still in the flesh. One such instance has particularly interested me. I refer to the case in which the late Mrs. Mary C. Vasek was able to manifest her presence at a circle in Los Angeles while she herself was travelling by train to Toledo (Ohio). I have made a number of enquiries into this curious case and find that it is thoroughly well authenticated and as the details may be new to many readers of *LIGHT* I give them here in brief form.

The late Mrs. Vasek was well known and highly esteemed in Spiritualistic circles in the U.S.A., where for many years she was the beloved pastor of the First Spiritual Temple at Los Angeles, California. The Spiritualists' Association of California nominated Mrs. Vasek as delegate to the Convention of the National Spiritualists' Association in 1926 to be held in Toledo, Ohio. While preparing to leave for Toledo she was asked by a group of intimate friends if she would try to repeat the phenomenon of projecting her astral body from a distance. They knew that she had this faculty. It was arranged that during the seventy-hour journey necessary to reach Toledo she would try to manifest at one circle at the end of the first day of her departure, September 27th, and again the next day at another circle. The first experiment was to be for direct voice; the second for materialization.

Leaving Los Angeles in the morning by the Union Pacific Railway, Mrs. Vasek made some slight preparation for her evening experiment by reducing her food to a minimum. At the appointed time she retired to her compartment.

We next find that at the home of Mrs. Rosebrook, Los Angeles, where the circle was being held, Mrs. Vasek manifested, and saw and recognized two of her friends. She had the impression that she had arrived late, which was in fact the case. She passed into the cabinet where she stated that she saw a number of spirits. The Guide said to her: "You are a mortal." She explained that she desired to manifest to the sitters by way of instruction. Taking the proffered trumpet she spoke and her well-known voice was recognized. The words uttered were: "I am here. This is Mrs. Vasek. I am still in Arizona."

Next morning on the train Mrs. Vasek related the experience of the night before to a lady who was travelling with her.

The next evening Mrs. Vasek again projected her astral body into the circle as arranged. She found the sitting had commenced and the Medium in a deep trance in her chair. She observed a number of spirits in the cabinet waiting to be materialized. Again the Guide, a young woman, spoke to her saying: "You are a mortal, but you may look on." This she did and afterwards was able fully to describe the operation of the materialization. She observed "a spirit assistant waving his arms as if collecting something," also "light bluish grey waves passing round the circle and the cabinet." She noted that all the sitters did not contribute to the formation of the waves, which appeared as a band of vibration about twelve inches wide and eighteen inches deep. This was manipulated about the head and neck of the entranced Medium from whose chin, throat and chest a white substance began to emanate. This emanation, which seemed to be of a tangible form, was taken by one of the guides

and put over the spirit waiting to be clothed. The Guide said in a firm, positive voice, "Think of your features, with precision: think of your form; think of yourself as you are exactly, etc." As the spirit thought of these things, Mrs. Vasek "saw the form building up for the spirit." The vibrations of those singing outside the cabinet were favourable for the building up of the form. Suddenly another air of quite different nature and rhythm caused a change in the power, and the substance fell away from the spirit who was about to materialize. Another spirit was called and clothed, and again an abrupt change in the singing caused the materialization to fail. Then a third attempt was unsuccessful.

Mrs. Vasek, while still within the cabinet, observed that her feet did not touch the floor, but later, when the singing commenced with a sympathetic melody, she found that she was able to stand on her feet before the Guide, who, recognizing that she was a "mortal," allowed her to materialize. After going through the preliminary thought-operation, the Guide placed over her a beautiful garment of white lace.

On emerging from the cabinet Mrs. Vasek found herself unable to see, but after a few moments she perceived and recognized a little daughter of one of the sitters. She tried to speak but could not utter a word. Presently one of the sitters came nearer, which apparently caused her a feeling of shock—something seemed to strike her chest. After this she found herself able to speak and said: "This is Mrs. Vasek. Note the time. Look what time it is. I am glad I have been privileged to do this." Then the vibrations in the circle appeared to become disturbed and she felt a "shock" at the solar plexus.

This shock was apparently caused by a doctor in the circle suddenly increasing the light in order, as requested, to observe the exact time. This sudden increase in light caused the materialization to break up outside the cabinet. She observed that the materializing substance with which the spirits were clothed dissolved and returned again into light bluish-grey vibrations emanating from the circle.

Members of the materializing circle were so gratified with the result of the experiment that they sent a telegram to Mrs. Vasek at the Toledo Convention and she shared the good news with her friends. The board of directors of the National Spiritualists' Association regarded the matter as of such importance that they requested Mrs. Vasek to make a "complete authentic record of these experiments in the Bureau of Phenomenal Evidence, this being the first authenticated case of a person making arrangements to materialize at a materializing circle and successfully performing the experiment while still in the body."

At my request I have received attestations from several of the witnesses present at this sitting, also a statement from a Los Angeles magistrate, Judge Fred E. Stivers, attesting to the perfect honesty of the Medium and her possession of wonderful psychic powers. Further, I have a letter from the President of the National Spiritualists' Association of U.S.A., Mr. J. P. Whitwell, to this effect: "I know the Rev. Mary C. Vasek very well. She is a prominent and well-known worker in Los Angeles, California, and is considered reliable and dependable in every way." I have a written statement that a lady in the first seance, who knew Mrs. Vasek but who was ignorant that a special experiment had been pre-arranged, was greatly disturbed at seeing Mrs. Vasek appearing clairvoyantly before her. Knowing that Mrs. Vasek

was actually travelling by train to Toledo the clairvoyant feared a railway accident in which Mrs. Vlasak might have been killed. This experience appears to be connected with a portion of Mrs. Vlasak's own report wherein she says that on entering the circle the first night she was attracted to a lady present but refrained from touching or going near her as the lady appeared to be startled.

Lack of space precludes my bringing forward other curious and evidential features concerning the extraordinary faculty of this remarkable Medium, whose untimely demise is a great loss. However, if desired, I would willingly supply further details to those who are genuinely interested.

THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF SPIRITUAL SCIENCE.

SOME ADVANCED THEOLOGICAL VIEWS.

From a new book, *Re-Interpretations*, by the Rev. W. S. Bowdon (Skeffington. 4s. 6d.), of which a review has already appeared in these pages, we take, as of especial interest, some brief extracts.

The first is from the Commendatory Note, by Sir Oliver Lodge, who admirably summarises in a few words a great Universal principle:—

Unity in the midst of diversity, a Continuum evolving into discontinuous units for purposes of individual development, and for the achievement of increasing value, yet all united in one great Whole: this surely lies at the root of all science and all philosophy. Even so has the ether been enriched by differentiation into localized discontinuous atoms and into the consequent worlds in space. Even so does the Universal Mind utilize the incarnating properties of matter to differentiate itself into separate personalities and manifest itself under individual forms.

The second and third citation we take from the chapters on Resurrection and the Communion of Saints, respectively:—

I claim, then, that here and now we have an etheric as well as a physical body. That this etheric body interpenetrates the physical and is its replica, so that, if seen apart from the physical body, it would be immediately recognised by anyone knowing the person whose body it was. And, it seems to me, it has been sufficiently demonstrated by scientific investigations that the etheric body is not inseparable from the physical, but may, and does, sometimes manifest itself apart from it during this earth life. There is in such cases a connecting link between the two bodies, which we may call the psychic cord. (Again a more modern term than the "silver cord" of Ecclesiastes, but signifying the same thing.) It is only when this cord is severed that "death" ensues, and the soul parts for ever with its outermost physical covering, to function henceforth through the etheric envelope it has gradually built up during the earth life. This form of etheric body is no more permanent than the physical, but, like it, will continually change with the change and development of the character of the ego, so that it will always truly and unmistakably reflect the state of the soul.

It certainly appears that the frequency of spiritual manifestations of this kind [i.e., those recorded in the New Testament] became less during the centuries which followed, when the faith of Christians became systematized, and individual aspiration and effort was directed on

stereotyped lines. But that is just what we should expect. Nevertheless, there have been those through the centuries, even when the freedom of spiritual flight was most fettered, who have risen above all imposed limitations. I should like to confront anyone with the fixed idea that conscious communion with the unseen spheres was only a phenomenon of Bible times, with the authenticated historical facts of the life of Joan of Arc, or of Francis of Assisi, or of St. Theresa! And yet so closed are some minds to the admission of the thought of any functioning of supernormal faculties, that they might find a material, scientific explanation even for those undoubted facts.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in the same chapter the author replies to those who object that communications from the unseen side of life are trivial and uninspiring. He gives the familiar explanation that what seems trivial to one may appear quite otherwise to the particular person to whom the message is addressed, and points out that "there are souls in every stage of unfoldment there, as here, whose words must be weighed, and accepted or rejected, in precisely the same way in which we weigh the utterances of others in this life."

Further, he points out that communications from the highest sources are such that they will often compare favourably in literary style with the finest productions of authors in this life. "These communications," he says, "confirm man's highest aspirations, enlarge understanding, embolden faith, correct errors, and give glimpses of the possibilities of life, both here and hereafter, beyond anything that man has hitherto grasped."

It is interesting to note that the book contains an appreciative Foreword by the Bishop of Liverpool.

EVIDENTIAL.

E. A. B. (Beckenham) writes:—

In the course of an interview with Mrs. Cantlon, recently, much that was evidential was given to me through her Guide, "White Chief". I may mention that it was a first sitting, and Mrs. Cantlon knew nothing of my friends or relations. At least twelve names were given, all of them correct, and some belonged to people I had not thought of, nor in the least expected to hear about. I should like to quote it all, but this incident struck me as specially convincing, because telepathy must be absolutely ruled out. "White Chief" accurately described the appearance and character of my brother who died in the War. He proceeded: "He wants you to be quite sure it is he."

"I don't doubt that, after your description."

"Yes, but he wishes you to go on feeling sure. He says he had a fall from a bicycle; do you remember?"

"No . . . I remember that he fell from a horse."

"No, no, a bicycle, he says, years ago, when he was a boy, about fifteen."

"I don't remember that he did."

"No, but he says his brother will; ask him. He made his brother promise not to tell anyone at home at the time, as he had several falls, and he thought they might not like his going on with it . . . his Mother would be anxious."

"Very well, I will ask him."

Later, that same evening, I asked this brother, without saying why, "Do you remember E. ever having a fall from his bicycle?"

He answered: "Why do you ask? I remember it very well. He had several falls, one rather a bad one, within a few days, when he was a boy, but he made me promise not to tell for fear of worrying Mother, so I never mentioned it."

THE INTERLINKING OF TWO WORLDS.

By H. A. DALLAS.

In the course of 1929 I had an experience which seems to me inexplicable except by taking it at its face value, that is to say, by accepting it as a communication from the other side. I will therefore relate the circumstances as far as I can; the details are of too private a nature to record in LIGHT.

I arranged an interview with Mrs. Brittain telling her that I wished to get into touch with a young wife on behalf of her husband.

From this point of view the whole interview was a great success, but it is not with this that I am now concerned.

As soon as she had passed into a trance state Mrs. Brittain told me that someone had come for a moment to thank me for help I had given to his wife. She mentioned the surname, and whilst I was considering whom the name might represent among my acquaintances, her control went on to mention several details by which I at once identified the unseen communicator as the husband of a friend of mine. This friend had already been a widow for some time when I first made her acquaintance, and I knew practically nothing about her husband. In a few words the communicator gave me information of which I had no knowledge, and which I hesitated to pass on to his widow, fearing that if the information was incorrect it might distress her. I realised, however, that I had no right to withhold what had been so unexpectedly imparted to me.

My friend replied that the statement was quite appropriate and it proved to be a source of consolation to her. She herself had had an interview with Mrs. Brittain some time previously but her husband had not been mentioned on that occasion. The husband's communication to me implied that he had himself been greatly helped through the comfort and help which his wife had derived by knowledge of the facts of Spiritualism.

The two worlds are so interlocked that "they, without us, cannot be made perfect". We see only what happens on this side of the veil, and are often unmindful of the fact that on the other side the same ministry of healing may be needed. Our friends co-operate with us, and we may make a link on earth which enables them to get into touch with some sad spirit in that Unseen Sphere.

A DIRECT-VOICE SITTING.

By MRS. JOHN MENZIES.

Another proof of survival, and the reality of communication, came to me at a recent sitting with the Scottish Voice-Mediums, the Misses Moore.

"Trivialities!" says the sceptic. Yes—little intimate things unknown to anyone present but the sitter.

Through the trumpet, giving her name, came the voice of one of my aunts, who had died four years ago. After a few remarks, assuring me that she would not return to material conditions, "for anything!" (with much emphasis), she continued: "Take out my little brooch, dear; take it out of that drawer and wear it constantly. It will help me to get into your conditions, and then I can be of more use to you in your work."

The Mediums knew nothing of me but my name, and had no knowledge of this aunt, or her brooch, which, for some months, had been relegated to "that drawer."

My husband came and spoke through the trumpet for a moment, the control, Andrew Wallace, having mentioned his name. Then the latter took the trumpet over to the Mediums, and I heard my husband talking in the air, about a yard above my head. The effect was exactly as if he stood behind my chair.

He alluded to "those delightful evenings alone with our books," (when we often read together, my low chair by his, or he read aloud while I worked), and spoke of his reading to me, which he says he *still does*, in some way I cannot yet grasp.

The Mediums, of course, knew nothing of those evenings, which were the joy of our lives.

Then came another bit of evidence. My husband had apparently used up his power, and Andrew was speaking.

"The little book," he said, "You know the little book."

I wondered what little book he meant.

"The little book with the photo," he went on, "if you had brought it your husband thinks he could have materialised his hand."

Then I realised that the control was alluding to a little case which holds two photos of my husband, and opens like a book. As a rule it lives in my hand-bag, ready for a refreshing glance at odd moments, but alas! on this occasion I had left it at home. Needless to say, the Mediums did not know of its existence.

This last incident opens up an interesting point. Why should the presence of that photograph assist my husband to materialise a hand? Have love and thought generated power round the little case?

A straw will show the direction of the wind; and this sitting seems to me analogous to a good substantial "straw".

Just as the sitting closed came a voice: "Stand by the cross." The only way I, personally, can follow that injunction is by the realisation that the cross is a symbol of strength, victory, joy—not of sorrow.

THE HUMAN EQUATION.

By TUDOR A. MORGAN.

A human being is, roughly, the product of his life and the sum of his potentialities. The unknown quantity which makes his existence an equation is his will. A broad analysis reveals man as composed of life, will and personality, the whole forming a being of individuality.

Individuality expresses itself as a point of view, but is modified, assisted, or restrained by personality. A man of strong character sees the events of life in a light different from his compeers. If his conceptions are expressed in his mode of life he is said to have strong individuality. But if his strong expressions are carried into the arts and differ from those of his confrères in conception or execution, he ranks as a genius.

The difference between such a man and his less distinguished contemporaries lies in his personality, which has been prepared by progressive development of his forebears, even though his immediate parentage may be degenerate. The assertion is proved by its converse. Devolution must be preceded by evolution, degeneration by progressive development. I remember such a degeneration from a grandsire, held in high esteem in the world of theology, through a quite ordinary son, to an imbecile grandson. Individuality was possessed by all three, but only one had the personality to give it effect. And he, by "fencing himself off with himself", lost the gift of imparting it.

Individuality has been expressed by the term "ego", but the self is not individuality alone, not personality only, but a blend of each welded by the will and manifested in form. If a man expresses individuality, he passes into the sphere of action the power of something within him. Actually it is the potentialities of his personality being unfolded by his life to the degree permitted by his will. Life is love, from which arise affections that manifest themselves in thought and action. Each person expresses many affections, but each affection is dominated by the quality of the love, or life, of the person. It is this quality which directs the self to

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select from its potential personality the factors that ultimately make the real personality, through which individuality is expressed.

To find the origin of this ruling affection we turn to God, and of Him our conceptions are anthropopathic. He is Love. Love in *potentia* is force: Love in action is motion. Human life is the process of converting the potential force of an affection of the Divine Love into the motion of thought and action. From the total mass of the Divine love arise an infinite number of affections. Each affection manifested is the Divine spark which animates the human, forming the total mass of love that is his life, giving him his individuality. The Divine affection is welded into the personality and manifested as a unit, enabling the Divine affection to have concrete experience; an outlet for the desire to serve, and thus satisfaction of desire; a free intercourse between all affections as manifest in the human race. This is our purpose, and it is to this end that the Divine spark is blended into the personality and welded, through manifestation in form, as individuality.

The personality is a mystery box. Where the individuality is purely spiritual, or rather, divine in origin, the personality is tripartite—physical, mental and spiritual. Parents endow the body of their child with its potentialities and form, some lines of development being more strongly stressed than others. All the possibilities may not be unfolded—they rarely are.

Potentialities received from earlier progenitors, resident in the parents but undeveloped, may be passed to the child and find fruition. These endowments, affecting form, structure and nervous organisation, have a strong bearing on the mental and spiritual prospects of the child. But the physical capabilities are not the only endowments. There are also the mental and spiritual qualities. Bound up with every physical cell are its mental (ectoplasmic, or astral) and spiritual counterparts, so that in one reproductive cell is the physical, mental and spiritual equipment of another generation. With this equipment the new generation builds its own individual character, the unfolding of each innate characteristic being tempered by the resident Divine spark and used to good or ill effect as dictated by the will. Some potentialities remain unfolded either because they do not harmonise with the ruling affection, or because the will rules them out or fails to overcome obstacles in the way. Man has his choice: the will is the dominant factor.

The will is not, as is commonly thought, a self-contained power or function, but rather a capacity for willing. An affection is endowed by the power and directed by the wisdom of the love from which it issues. Thus the Divine affection within us is maintained and directed by efflux from the Divine Love. But this affection, individualised and localised by the personality, becomes a human love, issues its own affections which are endowed and directed by the human will and understanding. These faculties, as receptacles, are not generators but re-transmitters, receiving strength and understanding in general, re-transmitting them in particular.

From the medley of inherited tendencies, innate potentialities, the urge of the inward monitor, the effects of the circumstances of environment, the ego makes its choice. It selects for itself things good or ill, overcomes difficulties or succumbs, builds a character, a strong individual personality, or allows the heap of materials to rot in the humid atmosphere of apathy.

THE TEMPLES OF LIGHT.—Writing from 58, Southwark Bridge Road, S.E.1, Mr. W. Harold Speer says: "Unless financial help is quickly forthcoming all my efforts for 3½ years will be lost. Notice calling up £500 [mortgage money] has been received, and over £100 is now owing for interest, rates, etc."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

(The Editor does not necessarily identify himself with the opinions expressed by Correspondents)

SPIRITUALISM AND THE B.B.C.

Sir,—May I remind those who are opposed to the attitude of the British Broadcasting Company, in regard to broadcasting addresses on Spiritualism, that a few years ago an address was actually broadcast by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and that that address was afterwards printed in the *Radio Times*. This fact seems to have been forgotten, human memories being short.

Another consideration which occurs to me is that if Sir Arthur were now allowed to broadcast he might have to face the possibility of a counter address by some opponent of the subject (perhaps quite ignorant of it) in the interests of fair-play. We must have some regard for the difficulties of the B.B.C. management who might become the target for other movements such as Christian Science, Theosophy, British Israelites and other cults, including the group who stand for a flat earth!

Sir Oliver Lodge lately gave a broadcast address, speaking as a scientist, and his addresses are always very carefully worded, introducing as few controversial points as possible.

The B.B.C. has made it a policy to steer clear of highly contentious matters and the various religious addresses given over the radio are never of a propagandist character, that is to say delivered solely in the interests of the particular form of religion concerned.—Yours, etc.,

G. H.

Bournemouth.

A POINT OF VIEW.

Sir,—I believe in God and in a future life and I consider that when we insist on details and particulars regarding these fundamental ideas we introduce the problems which divide mankind.

It seems to me quite needless for us to attempt to investigate the future life in its *details*. We should be content to prove that it is a fact, and to wait until we "pass on" for more light on its mysteries.

One of the greatest stumbling-blocks to inquirers into Spiritualism is the teachings alleged to come from the other side. One Medium, for example, teaches reincarnation and another denies it. This seems to be due to the influence of the Medium's own mind on the statements given from the other side.

Personally my only use for Spiritualism is to get proof of survival. The man who really believes in God and in a future life has all the light that is needed on this earth; he needs no sermons, for unless he is a lunatic he will guide his life accordingly.

If we are to unite mankind we must have no elaborate creeds; these are fatal to unity and cause strife; individuals may, of course, speculate as much as they like.—Yours etc.,

W. J. FARMER.

Ye Hive, Redruth, Cornwall.

[As regards the different teachings given in communications through Mediums, it is not necessary to attribute these divergences to the personal views of the Mediums concerned. Mediums have been known to give utterance—in their mediumistic state—to doctrines which normally they would dispute. Surely there is at least as much variety of opinion in the other world as in this one!—Ed.]

MR. AARON WILKINSON.—As we go to press, a report reaches us that this gifted Medium (of whose serious illness we were notified by Mr. J. Arthur Hill last week) passed away last Saturday.

LIGHT,
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SOUTH KENSINGTON, S.W.7.

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IN THE MATTER OF GREAT NAMES.

It is usually beneficial that a grievance—even when it is not a valid one—should be ventilated, and a diseased condition brought to the surface. That is why we have permitted the long discussion lately published under the title "Spectacular Spiritualism."

It is a very old question, this of the free use of great names in connection with psychic communications. Only the older generation of Spiritualists know how damaging to their subject in the past was the publication of messages attributed to historical personages. Some of those messages were simply silly and calculated to awaken contempt not merely amongst sceptics but amongst intelligent Spiritualists themselves, who grieved at the folly which brought Spiritualism into such ridicule. It is the sore memory of these things which is at the back of some of the present resentment shown when the question of great names crops up.

It is rather difficult to say anything very new on the matter. It has been threshed out so many times in the past, in LIGHT and elsewhere. Almost every argument, for and against, which has been employed in the recent controversy, has been advanced in previous discussions, and some of these arguments are quite valid so far as they go. There is no reason why those in spirit life who were formerly known to fame on earth should not send messages, equally with those who lived obscure and unknown. Indeed, as we can certify, they *do*, and in special instances the identity of the communicators is well established.

To us the two main considerations are that messages purporting to come from the great and famous should, before being presented to the public, be well-authenticated or, at the least, worthy of their attributed source. In many cases, of course, complete identification is impossible. We can only examine what is said. If we receive some threadbare platitude in the name of Socrates we can at once discard it. But even if the message proved to be some rich and rare piece of wisdom, we could not be sure, and to those who are not particularly concerned with personal values it could not be seen as a matter of much moment whether it came from Socrates or not. The question of the source of a message brings in a quite different criterion of values, viz., personal identity, which is a small matter where *impersonal* truth is concerned.

Many fine utterances, many high teachings, have come from the spirit side. The value of them would have been gravely handicapped were we required to believe that they came from certain great personages whose names might be given. The value

would not have been enhanced in the slightest degree. On the contrary, a doubtful and confusing element would have been introduced into the matter, and a quite needless challenge given to the unbelievers.

Our own experience is that, unless in very special circumstances, the public use of great names is unwise even when these have been verified (which is rarely the case). But, as we have seen in the recent discussion, a great many people do not take that view, and offer arguments in support of their position. Mr. H. E. Hunt whose letter originated the controversy is moved by the desire (which we share) that Spiritualism shall be presented to the public in a worthy and dignified way. But even on that question there are differences of opinion. Here (as elsewhere) one man's meat is another man's poison. Many times we have seen pieces of doggerel verse published as poems from the spirits of great poets. The obvious conclusion was that the recipients were unable to distinguish poetry from petty rhyme. But there was more than that to it. It was held that the stuff *must* have some value because it "came from the spirits". Perhaps it did; but then we know that incompetent rhymesters abound in both worlds. But why attribute such things to the great poets of the past and so dishonour their memory? That is our question and we still await a convincing answer. Much the same considerations apply to any quite commonplace platform address claimed to be delivered under the inspiration of some great orator of the past. Such things occur, unhappily, although they are not common in quarters where Spiritualism is pursued intelligently.

Our conclusion is that as brains are very unevenly distributed, Spiritualism, as a world-movement, must perforce proceed on a number of widely-differing grades, and be as various as the minds engaged in it. But so long as all are honest and sincere, we imagine that the damage caused by the inferior grades will be of more of an *intellectual* than a *moral* kind. The purists will be shocked by many faults of grammar; the precise people will be pained by loose and clumsy methods of presenting evidence; the artistic folk will be annoyed by all kinds of inartistic behaviour; but the philosophic observer will not be greatly disturbed, knowing that the fire of the emotions is more powerful and inspiring than the cold light of intellect; and that while the wise man is always honest, the honest man is not always wise. Indeed we have it on the highest authority that "the children of this world are wiser than the children of light."

THE "PHANTOM LORRY".

Mr. Ernest Oaten, Editor of the *Two Worlds*, adopts an attitude of mild scepticism towards the alleged "phantom vehicle" (referred to in this week's "Sidelights") which is stated to have caused a fatal accident along a stretch of road between Hyde and Sheffield, reputed to have been the scene of numerous and unaccountable road accidents. He sees "no reason to believe that there is any psychic or abnormal reason for the happening" and regards the rumours of psychic manifestations in association with this stretch of highway as being much exaggerated. Mr. Oaten, who is, of course, one of the leading authorities on psychic phenomena, and himself a Medium of great power, has visited the scene of the reported sinister happenings. His verdict is as follows: "We tried at least half a dozen methods which should lead to the detection of psychic power if any existed there, but there was no reaction whatever. We think there is nothing in the story of alleged hauntings at the spot. There are perfectly natural explanations for the incidents recorded." It is satisfactory that so mature and balanced an observer as Mr. Oaten should have come forward to put a check to what may be no more than a matter of superstitious rumours and hysterical vapourings.

SIDELIGHTS.

Sir Ernest A. Wallis Budge, the famous Egyptologist and Keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum for over thirty years has made a statement concerning the alleged "curse of the Pharaohs", which has again come under public notice following the recent death of Lord Westbury. Sir Ernest, who is seventy-two, said that he had dug up many mummies in ancient lands, but so far no "curse" had descended upon him. In any case he was not afraid.

"Don't you think," said Sir Ernest Wallis Budge to a *Morning Post* correspondent (Saturday, Feb. 22nd) "that these people who have been said to have perished under the curse would have died anyhow? There was nothing, I am convinced, in the tomb to poison them. There are no written curses on these tombs. The only written curses I know of in Egypt are on Papyri, and they are directed at people who steal or damage the book. But there is another way in which we can look on the curse of the kings. There is the psychological aspect. If a man gets a fright and thinks he will suffer untold agonies, then he probably will."

The Canton Government, says a Canton newspaper, has issued an edict against divination, fortune-telling, astrology, and similar practices. Deputations, including a representative of the Taoist community, have submitted petitions to the Canton Bureau of Public Safety, praying for a postponement of the edict. General Au Yeung Kiu, head of the bureau, stated that all forms of superstitions, including fortune-telling, and "all sorts of paid service of praying", are to be discarded.

The *Journal* of the Polynesian Society reproduces in its Vol. xxx, No. 2, an extract from *Harper's Magazine* of Nov. 1920, giving an account of a case of trance-mediumship in Eastern Polynesia. Briefly, the story is as follows. Many years ago a Portuguese harpooner deserted from an American whaler and hid himself in an island, referred to as "Ahuahu", one of the Austral Group to the south-east of the Cook Group. (This island, says the commentator, is now known as Mangaia.) The deserter was welcomed by the natives, given a piece of land, and lived on the island, marrying a native girl. (This girl had become an old lady at the time the story was given, in 1920.) Later, the white man left on another whaling ship that touched at Ahuahu to earn some money, promising his dusky wife to return within a year. He sailed away, but never returned.

To continue, "The deserted wife, like so many of the Ahuahu women had an ancestor who kept her in touch with current events. Being particularly fond of her husband, she indulged in a trance from time to time, to keep herself informed of his welfare. Several months after his departure the tragedy occurred. . . . The woman awoke from a trance with a cry of anguish: her husband was dead." She had a vision of her man, the harpooner, standing in the bows of one of two rival vessels pursuing the same whale. There was a sudden quarrel between the rival harpooners, and the woman's husband was fatally hurt. The vision was told with much detail, and the woman's story was confirmed when the whaler returned to Ahuahu within the year, bringing the news of the husband's death in the exact circumstances seen in the vision.

Disturbances of a poltergeist nature are reported at Conyers Park, New Barnet, where a ten-year old girl is said to have met a mysterious death some years ago. Mrs. Ellis, one of the local residents, is reported, in the *Evening Standard* of Feb. 21st, to have said: "I leave my furniture in one place, and when I return I find it in another. Tables, chairs, and even beds and carpets have been moved in my absence. I have heard strange noises in the bedrooms, and when I go upstairs I find the furniture in confusion, but I see nobody."

At an inquest at Hyde, Cheshire, held on a man named Ridgway who died through a road accident while riding pillion behind a motor-cycle, the driver of the machine, Mr. Albert Collinson stated that he swerved in order to avoid colliding with a heavy motor-vehicle that backed out of a side road. He remembered nothing more, and regained consciousness in an infirmary. It was proved, however, that there was no side road at the spot where the accident took place, and motorists who were on the road at the time declared that no such heavy vehicle was seen. The accident took place along a stretch of road that has a sinister reputation.

A large number of accidents have taken place along this length of highway (about a mile from Hyde) and many of these have apparently been causeless. Occupants of houses facing this stretch of road have testified to strange manifestations that appear to herald these accidents. Mr. William Gratton, licensee of the five-hundred-year-old "New Inn" told a *Daily Express* representative (issue of February 20th) that during the last six years he and his wife have frequently been disturbed by footsteps outside the yard of his inn. Said Mr. Gratton, "They sound exactly like a rather heavily-built man walking up to the back door, hesitating and then walking away again. They are always the same. I am convinced they are not part of a hoax."

Continuing his account Mr. Gratton says, "At first we did not associate the footsteps in any way with the accidents, but lately I have noticed that the sound is almost invariably the warning of an impending crash. I keep a first-aid equipment in the house—and seldom find that I have prepared it unnecessarily."

Mr. Collinson, the driver of the motor-cycle, whose sudden swerve to avoid the non-existent vehicle resulted in the fatal accident, said, "They tell me I could not possibly have seen a lorry, and yet I am positive I did."

Mr. E. B. Rice, interviewed by a *Daily Express* reporter, said he had on a number of occasions met a phantom lorry on the road between Daventry and Coventry. He added: "I met it last on Monday night [Feb. 17th]. I was passing a lorry, which was coming towards me, when I saw another lorry in front of me going in the same direction as my car. I jammed on my brakes, and when I stopped I found no lorry was there." This experience has happened several times to Mr. Rice, who has noticed that on each occasion a motor-car with headlights had passed a few minutes before. He suggested that the rays from the lights might be "in some way picked up and thrown back in front of a driver, so that he sees what he takes to be a vehicle in front of him."

A SPIRITUALIST LECTURER'S EXPERIENCES IN AMERICA.

By HORACE LEAF, F.R.G.S.

I have just completed a series of lectures and psychic demonstrations at the Annual Mass Meetings conducted by the State Spiritualists' Association of Minnesota. These meetings have aroused considerable interest in the Press and among the public. The audiences were typically attentive and enthusiastic.

There is no place in the world so good for the practice of mediumship as America, and, from the Medium's point of view, no people so easy to "read for", as Americans. Far from being as hard-headed and sceptical as they pride themselves on being, they are warmly sympathetic and willing to be convinced. This makes them excellent "sitters". The result is that the percentage of veridical tests obtained is high, although it must be admitted this very attitude makes it more possible for the fraudulent Medium to trade on them. It may be safely said that there are better Mediums—and more frauds—in this country than in any other. The cheats who "get it over" here would stand no chance of success elsewhere. They are so successful that their victims frequently resent their exposure.

I have witnessed so many extraordinary public demonstrations of clairvoyance and clairsaidence in the United States that I can safely say that American public Mediums lead the world; but these successful demonstrations have so seized upon the imagination of the American public that far more attention is paid to supernormal phenomena than to psychic philosophy. But the desire for what, in the U.S.A., is popularly called "teaching", is by no means dead. Good lecturers are sure of a big following, and there is every inducement for would-be public-workers to pay attention to the intellectual and philosophical side of Spiritualism and psychic science.

I have made a speciality of conducting class-lectures in practically every city that I have visited and have been gratified at the interest aroused. It is easy to form large classes dealing with the psychology and development of mediumship three evenings a week in the same hall, and the same students will attend them all. Most of the students are ordinary business folk. There is just as much interest, however, among the more intellectual types.

I have received an invitation to deliver a series of twelve lectures on mediumship and another series on mental, spiritual and magnetic healing, under the auspices of a branch of the American Society for Psychical Research, next August, and already a large number of students have signified their desire to attend them. Some of these applicants belong to one of the most conservative of American colleges, and others are students at a well-known Christian seminary for the training of clergymen.

There is less unanimity of belief among American Spiritualists than among, say, British Spiritualists. This is doubtless the result of the philosophical situation; but on the whole they move step by step in the same direction as ourselves. Great respect is paid to European opinion. American Spiritualists are much less dogmatic than one would suppose them to be. This is excellent for the interchange of thought, and is in strict keeping with the traditions of the country. The reason why America is usually the home of new religious and philosophical thought is largely because of a singular open-mindedness not to be found in older countries. Age makes for conservatism. In no other land would it have been possible for Modern Spiritualism, Christian Science, Unity, and a host of other systems, good, bad, and indifferent, to have obtained their initial footing. Of course the illogical and bizarre flourish alongside of the more rational, but this is understandable, and, on the whole, a good thing.

I am strong for the interchange of ideas. While

Europe has much it can teach America, the compliment need not be all on one side. That is why effort should be made to invite the most representative American workers to England and the Continent. I have recently been privileged to see the work of the best all-round worker that I have yet encountered in American Spiritualism—the Reverend Will J. Erwood—and have obtained an expression of willingness from him to visit Europe. Nothing could be better for the Cause. An excellent speaker and fine thinker, he is endowed with most remarkable psychic powers of the clairsaident, clairvoyant and psychometric kind. As a ballot-reader—a form of psychism much favoured in America—he has no peer, as his work bears all the marks of pure mediumship. He does not even open the ballots, although he frequently gets the correct contents of them. I have observed Erwood on several occasions, always with increasing admiration. Societies interested in this visiting proposition should communicate with me at my London address, as I shall be delighted to act as honorary secretary for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements.

So large is America that I have already travelled about twenty thousand miles in it—including Canada—and have seldom visited the same city twice. I shall cover at least five thousand more miles before finishing this tour, visiting over thirty States, and enjoying every moment of the time. Americans are exceedingly generous people and have a fine idea of a person's economic value. There is no attempt to exploit workers unfairly. This should be an inducement to a higher standard of lecturers, and no young man or woman with proper qualifications should regard this field of activity as undeserving of their efforts.

The average American is by no means a fundamentalist. True, Christian faiths as primitive as anyone can imagine flourish in communities here, but these sects are usually far too much concerned in establishing themselves economically to make much effort spiritually. I have met all kinds of Christians; some of these have gone to the length of wearing their hair long in the firm belief that to do so had "saving grace", and had sold their goods, holding all their property in common. (This system appeared to degenerate into hard work for a mere livelihood on the part of the majority of the community, while the head of it lived in luxury as the "chosen of God". It seems impossible that otherwise intelligent men and women can be so foolish, but in the name of religion almost anything is claimed to be justified!)

The average American treats these "strange guys" with respect, and even resents criticism of them on the grounds that "after all no one can be quite sure what true religion is if it must be based upon the Bible". There is some truth in this; the Bible can be made to prove anything—including Spiritualism. This fact alone wins Spiritualism considerable respect in this country.

A few weeks ago I made the acquaintance of a New Jersey newspaper editor who had been a Presbyterian minister. He retired from the ministry on the ground that orthodox Christianity had no suitable message for the death-chamber. "I hated visiting the dying and conducting funerals for that reason," he assured me; "I could offer no reasonable consolation. To place one's faith in survival on an isolated incident said to have happened nineteen hundred years ago seemed insufficient and too uncertain to me. Something more substantial was necessary. Then I heard of psychic science and Spiritualism, began to investigate the phenomena of mediumship and received convincing proof of survival. With this glorious news I went into the death-chamber feeling that at last I could console the dying and their friends. Imagine my surprise when I found my message only aroused resentment, which resulted finally in threats on the part of my congregation, that if I continued to assure them and their sick ones of a *rational* reunion in the beyond they would drive me from the church!"

TESTIMONY

We refer to the testimonial of Mr. Merthyr Tyndal, mentioned in Merton Park, addressed to the Spiritualist Association, rendered in circumstances so few devotees of the Testimonial, with urgent necessity.

This gentleman did not wait to be expelled but retired and became a force in literature and politics—incidentally making a fortune. He is to-day one of Spiritualism's best friends in his locality. His experience shows the effect of the popular notion of the after-life from a new angle.

On the whole, America is as unbelieving as most other countries; religious tolerance must not be confused with religious belief.

I have been surprised at the great number of Christian Scientists who have become serious students of Spiritualism. It appears that this religion affords practically no consolation in the face of death, although it is a great stimulus to material living and success. Apart from its great work in curing sickness and inspiring to the attainment of wealth, Christian Science offers little else, while it discourages its devotees from investigating other religious fields. "Malicious animal magnetism" has become a "phobia" with many Christian Scientists and is the principal fear that stops them from interesting themselves in Spiritualism. Mrs. Baker Eddy, however, appears to be losing caste in America owing to the recent publication of a book purporting to throw light upon her peculiar mentality. One leading Michigan Christian Scientist admitted to me that Mrs. Eddy had been a Medium, but that she felt it was in the best interests of her followers to deny the fact. "She evidently saw that Spiritualism was unsuited to the mass of people and tended to distract their minds from more essential truths," he said.

In a few days' time I shall go south to Texas and then travel westward to California, where the Spiritualists are conducting a series of mass meetings of an educational character. Spiritualism in California is said to be very strong.

THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND.

On Wednesday, the 19th ulto, at the British College of Psychic Science, Miss Lilian Henderson of Glastonbury delivered a deeply interesting lecture on "The Arthurian Epic in its various aspects". The subject was treated in a very comprehensive way, including the mystical, material and historical associations of the theme and without dogmatizing on what was fact and what was merely legendary. She pointed out that when the idea of the existence of King Arthur and his Knights was so ingrained in the minds of the British people, particularly in the districts closely associated with his history as handed down to us, there was almost certain to be a foundation of truth at the bottom, and Miss Henderson gave several illustrations of less important legends which, through certain factors that subsequently came to light, had proved true in substance and in fact.

The chair was taken by Mr. Wallis Mansford, Hon. Secretary of the London Institution, who gave some interesting psychic experiences of his own in connection with his poetry recitals on Tennyson.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. W. H. EVANS.

We referred, last week, to the proposal that a testimonial shall be made to Mr. W. H. Evans, of Merthyr Tydfil, in recognition of his many years' work as Medium, writer and speaker. As then mentioned, Mr. R. A. Bush, of 8, Mostyn Road, Merton Park, S.W.19, will act as Treasurer, to whom donations to the Testimonial Fund should be addressed. Mr. Evans has contributed to the Spiritualistic Press for some thirty years and has rendered an immense amount of unpaid service in circumstances of difficulty. He is an example of unselfish devotion and an ability rare in a man with so few advantages. We can cordially support the Testimonial, which is altogether deserved as well as urgently necessary.

RAYS AND REFLECTIONS.

"Shall we," asks an orator, "people the mystic temples of the past with the living thoughts of the present?" No, nor the mystic temples of the present with the dead thoughts of the past.

Mrs. Lambert, in her valuable book, *A General Survey of Psychical Phenomena*, relates that, on one occasion, she objected that an absurd kind of manifestation, which she witnessed, was a waste of force. The reply came instantly: "It was worth the effort because it made you laugh." Those who know how much the conditions at a seance are helped by cheerfulness will appreciate the point.

In an article in a Scottish paper, dealing with psychic faculty amongst the Scottish Highlanders, reference is made to the Highlanders' repugnance to talking of these matters, which they regard with reverence. It seems to me that there is much to be said for this attitude of reticence, for nothing vulgarises the mystical side of life so much as frivolous talk and "the babble of the market place".

According to a Massachusetts newspaper cutting, an American clergyman has been expressing some doubts as to the reality of the spirit control of "Margery" (Mrs. Crandon of Boston). Unfortunately the reverend critic is under the erroneous impression that "Margery's" brother is named Willie. He says: "The control of Margery is supposed to be her brother Willie who died some years ago . . . but it is very possible that Willie is really her subconscious mind." This kind of criticism "gives me the willies"—to use an American phrase. One would like to hear what Walter had to say about it!

It was a strong advocate of Spiritualism—one of its public champions—who, in earlier days, told me there was no such thing as accurate prediction of the future. But then I had listened to other Spiritualists who had as stoutly denied the reality of psychic photography and certain other phenomena. These people were simply victims of the same weakness which they so strongly denounced in the opponents of Spiritualism—viz., the disposition to suppose that anything outside of one's experience could have no existence. But, after all, this scepticism has one useful result. It is a safeguard against believing too much or basing one's belief simply on the *ipse dixit* of authorities who may simply be blind leaders of the blind.

It is well to have a proper appreciation of yourself; but self-esteem can be exaggerated to a degree that makes it a trifle ridiculous. Several times I have been confronted by those who announced in a loud voice that they did not believe in spirits, following up the proclamation with a stream of violent abuse of the subject. It was quite clear that the critical person thought that I ought to wilt under the attack, and feel that the whole fabric of Spiritualism would now reel and totter. But as neither of these things happened, the aggressor, clearly a little disconcerted by the silence, would alter his tactics, and after a time one gathered that he was expecting that some attempt would be made to change his opinion. Later it would transpire that he was firmly of opinion that if such a man as he could be converted, the last obstacle to the triumphant progress of Spiritualism would be removed. I found it was better to let this type of person learn by experience what he would never have discovered by any amount of argument, viz., his real value and his true place in the world.

D. G.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

By W. H. EVANS.

QUESTION: *Why should a person who has reached the highest spiritual ecstasy in communion with high spirits, during the same evening experience the very reverse? That is, he sees very undeveloped spirits.*

ANSWER: This may be due to natural reaction, but I would suggest that the seeing of undeveloped spirits after such ecstatic experiences is a definite call to service. We must be careful not to confuse mere emotionalism with ecstasy, though there is no ecstasy without emotion, but it is disciplined emotion. If the ecstasy is real the one who experiences it should feel no repugnance at the sight of undeveloped or evil spirits, but should be filled with a compassionate desire to help them out of the fallen condition. All real spiritual experience results in the deepening of our compassion, the increasing of our tolerance, and nerving our arm to service for the well-being of our fellows. I suggest this is the reason for such an experience as stated in the question.

QUESTION: *So many people seek to develop psychic gifts; would it not be better to seek spiritual unfoldment and let psychic powers develop naturally?*

ANSWER: The more "excellent way" as Paul named it, is certainly the one to walk in, but we must bear in mind that we are in different stages of development. Some are awake to the physical only, others to the psychical, and a few to the spiritual. We should strive after the "best gifts", by which, no doubt, Paul meant the unfoldment of the whole man. But the development of the spiritual nature usually brings into awareness the lesser but very necessary psychic powers. It is unfortunately only too true that many people are content with the lesser things, and, indeed, confuse them with the greater and thus lose much that is of value. But while we seek the higher we must not be censorious of those who unfold their psychic powers, for such ultimately lead to a realisation of higher truths. In the rush to prove to an unwilling world that man is a spiritual being there is a great demand made upon those whose psychic nature is active, and in the main they have done splendid work. The unfoldment of our psychic being is usually superintended by the spirit people who see the necessity of these manifestations at this stage of human history. By and by there will not be the same need for them and the public will grow to understand their value. We shall then see the out-reaching of the race towards the higher things. At present the development of the psychical nature of man is as important and valuable as that of the spiritual. But the aim should always be towards the spiritual, otherwise degeneration sets in.

QUESTION: *Is sudden death sudden glory? What happens?*

ANSWER: I don't think there is any sudden death in the sense in which we regard it. That is, while to us there may be no signs in a person of a sudden passing, the guides of that person will know, and due preparation be made for the reception of the newly-born spirit. The spirit world is one of law and order, and the reception of all souls is prepared for. To one passing through "the valley of the shadow" this may not be apparent any more than the preparations made to receive a new-born babe are apparent to the child. But in both cases preparation is made. The saying "sudden death sudden glory" is based on wrong ideas of the other life. The condition on passing to spirit-life depends upon the kind of life one has lived here. If one has lived selfishly, meanly or evilly, then sudden death may well be sudden darkness. But for the average man the next life will be an improvement upon this, and in that sense it will be a glory for the passing soul. What happens at death has often been told and the questioner can do no

better than obtain Dr. A. J. Davis's pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Death*, in which the process is beautifully described.

QUESTION: *Do you believe in free-will? Don't you think we can only go so far; that our lives are mapped out and that God has finished his work?*

ANSWER: My interrogator apparently does not believe in free-will. His comment that our lives are "mapped out" is fatalism in another dress. Much depends upon what we mean by free-will. Now there is one fact which I think is of importance; it is the sense of freedom which we all feel. Is this an illusion? Are we deceived in thinking that we act according to our nature and not by the compulsion of outward circumstances? Taking into consideration the fact that we all react to our environment according to the stage of development we have reached, we yet respond to it intelligently. That is, we weigh up probabilities and decide accordingly. We have choice, and this means responsibility. If my life is mapped out for me I am not acting responsibly, I am simply carrying out the decisions of a power of which I know practically nothing. I am fated, and that destroys my responsibility in the matter.

May I suggest that free-will does not mean doing as one likes. We are in a world in which there are millions of people and we have definite responsibilities towards one another. That being so, any action of ours which in any way limits or hinders the higher development of our fellows, is a denial of free-will. Free-will really means a close adherence to law rather than acting in opposition to it. Free-will for us is relative, not absolute. It really consists in the unfolding of our intelligence and responding to the circumstances of life according to our highest and clearest light. Consequently there are varying degrees of freedom; the more highly developed the individual the greater is his freedom.

NOTES ON NEW BOOKS.

"Comrades on the Homeward Way." By H. A. Dallas. (Collins. 21s. net.)

Miss Dallas is so well-known a writer and her reputation for sanity of view so well-founded, that any book from her pen might almost be commended in advance. The present volume is admittedly expensive, but many will think the price not too high for its merits. It is to some degree a re-statement—it recapitulates some of the less-known examples of evidence of survival and identity, drawing considerably on the work of F. W. H. Myers and the communications received from him since his decease in 1901. Miss Dallas is happy in her choice of evidential episodes, and deals with many matters which are not sufficiently known to the general reader. To the present reviewer the book was full of interest both as regards matter and manner, and to-day when Spiritualism and Psychical Research are coming to the front in public thought, its appearance is timely. It is not only a book to be read in the ordinary way, but one which in after years should be of value as a volume for reference; it records so much that otherwise would not be easily accessible.

G.

"Memories of Hazrat Inayat Khan." By a Disciple. (Riders. 3s. 6d.)

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January, 1930

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Croydon.—The New Gallery, Katharine Street.—March 9th,
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