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THE JESTING SPIRITS

MR. SACHEVERELL SITWELL'S VIEWS ON THE POLTERGEIST PROBLEM

Review by H. F. PREVOST BATTERSBY

A WORK on Poltergeists is very welcome, however little it may contribute to our understanding of an enterprise which is unknown to many, derided by more as a spook-hunter's delusion, and about which even its students seem to be in complete disagreement.

Such a subject could be sure of sympathetic treatment from Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell, as it provides valuable agenda even when viewed through his poetic moods; and, though one may be disposed to turn down some of his theories, it is not more often than he turns them down himself; for the poltergeistic atmosphere is a cob-webbed maze, and, such are its intricacies that conclusions forced upon one from a score of instances are proclaimed inadequate by the next to be considered.

Though the baffling absurdity of the Poltergeist may be the chief source of its interest, an understanding of its potencies would seem to offer a key to a variety of psychic and biological happenings which need clearing up.

The point most urgently in debate is the source of its dynamic energy. Is the Poltergeist a separate entity, a being of some sub-human order—or even a cast-off fragment of humanity—or is it an expression of the super-self, that part of our spiritual make-up which, according to the Hawaiian *kahunas*, is never completely incorporated in our physical envelope?

In support of the latter theory, stress is laid on the frequent proximity of an adolescent, of either sex, to the affected area; though on that it is impossible to place complete reliance, since, in cases like that of Willington Mill, where the manifestations lasted for twelve years, as Mr. Sitwell puts it, "the Medium is missing. There is no one on whom to fasten the guilt."

In other instances, where the fastening seems easy, and the Medium obvious, something still remains to be accounted for.

Esther Cox, who swelled like a blown-up bladder, may have contrived her own personal disfigurement, or even the conversion of herself into a pincushion, but she could scarcely, unaided, have produced the loud claps of thunder under her bed which shook the whole room, or the poundings all day long upon the roof which could be heard two hundred yards away.

The girl in this case, as in many others, may have been the instrument, but was not the cause of the performance; and here, as often elsewhere, there was exhibition of an energy that was more than human.

Mr. Sitwell speaks of the Poltergeist as "a manifestation of the sub-conscious," but this seems to over-load an already over-worked hypothesis; and really, where there is no dispute that by this strange power pieces of furniture have been lifted to the ceiling, hurled about a room, and an entire house shaken from top to bottom, it seems rather an anti-climax to suggest that "as to the levitation of objects, many successes, it is evident, could be won with the help of a piece of black thread."

What if they were? Our interest is with achievements which could not thus have been won, as is certainly the case with all the characteristic Poltergeist feats; for there is an established repertory which carries the poltergeistic stamp upon it.

The curious slow, curved or spiral flight of objects through the air; the varying force of their impact; the concealment of their starting point; their penetration of solid matter; their heated surface; noises, from intelligent raps, howlings, and whistlings to claps of thunder. A variety of

unpleasant practical joking, and more serious sorts of mischief.

These seem to be at the easy command of the Poltergeist, and Mr. Sitwell tells us: "The theory is that these manifestations have their centre of energy in the person of a child, who performs them, both consciously or unconsciously, being gifted, for the time being, with something approaching a criminal cunning."

That the Poltergeist can obtain from children of a certain age something which can convert its otherwise fluid abilities into a striking force—just as a crystal can solidify a saturated solution—is very likely; but numerous instances, not quoted by the author, prove that the child is not essential, and, in one which he gives, the disturbances preceded the arrival of the young woman by several days; which seems to put too extreme an elongation on her subconscious.

And, though Mr. Sitwell is now and again lured by the attraction of an easy solution, he does speak of "excessively curious forces," and mentions "three or four great instances, during the last three centuries of something genuinely rare and inexplicable." "Once in a century," he says, "and perhaps not more often, it is reasonable to expect supernatural events upon this scale of magnitude and reality. The circumstances have to be deeply and entirely propitious, as much so as at the birth of a Mozart, a Liszt, a Paganini."

That is a speculation which transcends our present knowledge of more things than Poltergeists; and seeing that the Poltergeist is active in every quarter of the globe, and that only a very small proportion of those activities can ever be brought to a critical appraisal, so startling a conclusion may well be deferred. Indeed, recent accounts of the Poltergeist in India run counter to some of Mr. Sitwell's theories as to the appropriate environment; though it is doubtless true, as he says, "that not only persons, but places, must be suited," and that such an area as the Isle of Axholme, described by Hetty Wesley as "a place devoid of wisdom, wit or grace," might provide a favouring atmosphere.

When he talks of "an infectious condition of hallucination," the author seems inclined for the moment

to slip into the methods of uneasy research. "The rappings," he says, "seem never to be, categorically, proved or disproved. And, most important of all, there are the movements of inanimate objects, together with circumstantial accounts of their strange behaviour during flight, descriptions which might apply as much to the witnesses being in a state of hallucination as to the true conduct of chairs or crockery in transit."

THE SOURCE OF POWER

What produces, one wonders, "a state of hallucination"? A man enters his house, finds pieces of crockery being thrown at his head, and notes certain extraordinary features in their flight. It is his first contact with Poltergeists, creatures of which he has never heard. At what point did he enter "a state of hallucination," and why does his account so exactly resemble that of every other observer?

"I knelt down near the head of my bed," writes Mr. W.G.G., an Associate of the Society for Psychical Research, from Sumatra, "and tried to catch the stones as they were falling through the air towards me, but I could never catch them; it seemed to me that they changed their direction in the air as soon as I tried to get hold of them . . . They came right through the kadjang, but there were no holes in the kadjang. When I tried to catch them there at the very spot of coming out, I also failed . . . At first I thought they might have been meteor-stones because they were so warm, but then again I could not explain how they could get through the roof without making holes."

At what stage, one would like to know, did Mr. G. enter into "a state of hallucination"? No, so cheap a resort is what was admirably described in another case, three centuries ago, as "the eternal evasion."

Reluctant as he is to credit such commonplace insignia as rappings, Mr. Sitwell accepts the chair in the T. B. Clarke case, which "was spun round and round with incredible speed and violence, only to come to an abrupt stop, as though held still again in a grip of steel."

In a half-hearted attempt to magnify the part played by the human accessories, the author suggests that, since the Drummer of Tedworth was known to the Mathers, to the Wesley family at Epworth, and thus in its turn to Mr. Procter at Willington Mill and to the Methodist family at Derrygonnelly, it would seem "as if these cases were not so isolated as we think." He even adds: "It would be interesting to know whether a life of John Wesley was among the books at Cashen's Gap;" and if so, one might add, whether it was the daughter of the house or Gef, the talking mongoose, who studied it.

Gef, indeed, seems to be coming back into the picture. It is recalled that some little supplement of his kind was often the companion of witches, many of whom at their trial confessed to the harbouring of impish animals.

There was the monkey seen by the children and the long-snouted white cat at Willington Mill; the little animal like a badger that ran from under the children's beds, and the little creature, "like a rabbit, but less," that leapt out of the kitchen copper at Epworth Rectory.

"There is a parallel more extraordinary still," says the author. "The spirit of Ringcraft cried out 'Kick cuck;' the mongoose of Cashen's Gap greeted Mr. Northwood with a cry of 'Charlie, Charlie, chuck, chuck, chuck;' the Poltergeist of Willington Mill called in the children's bedroom, 'Chuck, chuck,' and then made a noise like a child sucking;" also, the spirit at Epworth Rectory "gobbled like a turkey-cock."

One seems to remember that Gef of Cashen's Gap had a varied repertory in the way of speech, was in many ways a rather talented person; but to Mr. Sitwell there is nothing to be said for such a spirit.

"There is an obscene or drivelling sense to it, and nothing more than that. It is in all things unholy, unhallowed, and not human. Who can doubt that it is the projection, not of the brain, but of the obscene

(Continued in next column)

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CREMATION—ITS PSYCHIC ASPECTS

IN a letter published in *LIGHT* of May 30th, Mr. Snæbjorn Jonsson wrote: "Amongst the crowd of questions . . . raised in my mind was the one whether cremation is thought or known to affect the power of the spirit to materialise." This problem was referred to Mr. George A. Noble, Hon. Treasurer of the Spiritualist Community, who for many years was Secretary of the Cremation Society. His comments are given below.

* * *

MR. GEORGE A. NOBLE'S COMMENTS

VERY many thanks for your letter enclosing copy of Mr. Jonsson's letter published in a recent issue of *LIGHT*, which I had noticed.

As you know, my long connection with cremation has been centered mainly on the practical side, and while only too pleased to contribute something on this subject generally, I hardly feel competent to write authoritatively on the psychic aspect or the possible implication of cremation in occult matters.

What information I have been able to gain in this direction has been from known psychic works or from the published records of spirit communications appearing from time to time, which, as you are aware, have not always been of a consistent character. Some time ago, I seem to remember, Madame Blavatsky was reported to have communicated a posthumous statement regarding complications arising from her own cremation, but at sittings I have had with Miss Marjory Rowe and in circles conducted by other reliable Mediums I have received congratulatory messages confirming the value of my practical work, which, I have been assured, has assisted many who have passed over. In what precise way, I cannot explain, although I have taken this as greatly depending on the state of spiritual development at the time of passing.

It may be as well to mention in this connection that although I agree with the general opinion expressed

(Continued from previous column)

senses, of the deep, hidden underworld which is at the back of every mind."

One is glad to quote so poetic a passage, even though in disagreement, and to thank the writer for having put together so much of Poltergeist history and helped our understanding with so admirable an examination.

It was a happy thought to include his sister's "sinister" poem on the Demon of Tedworth, but the comic illustrations seem scarcely appropriate to so serious an undertaking.

Poltergeists, by Sacheverell Sitwell. London. Faber and Faber Limited. 1940. 15/-.

MR. H. PRICE SAYS DISTURBANCES ARE REAL

MR. Harry Price, reviewing Mr. Sitwell's book in *John o' London* (26th July) says:

"Mr. Sitwell has chosen wisely, according to the material that was available, and I consider that three of his 'best' cases are indeed outstanding. But when he wrote *Poltergeists*, he had not seen the Borley Rectory report, which he mentions. When this is published I am sure that he will consider the Essex poltergeist case the best authenticated mystery of them all . . .

"Are some poltergeist manifestations genuine, or are they all due to fraud? In his academic survey of the subject, Mr. Sitwell—as I did after thirty years' personal contact with the phenomena—concludes that the disturbances are *real*. In spite of occasional trickery, and possible mal-observation on the part of those recording such things, the evidence for paranormality is vast and impressive, and the genuineness of many of these cases cannot be doubted. And this evidence comes to us from all parts of the world, civilised and savage."

that cremation should not take place within three days of decease, it does open the question as to what provision is made in the spirit-state in the case of the vast proportion of the Eastern races, amongst whom a primitive form of burning has been practised from time immemorial and whose custom it is to dispose of the body before sundown on the day of death, for obvious climatic and sanitary reasons. So far as cremation in this country is concerned, the very stringent regulations and safeguards imposed by law ensure that an interval of not less than three days must usually elapse before a body is cremated.

While Spiritualism needs no extraneous arguments to support its teaching as to the continuity of life, or that it is the soul of man which survives and not his physical body, there is no doubt that false sentiment and tradition has invested "the last resting place" with a theological significance which has proved a stumbling block to progress in spiritual matters. Cremation, on the other hand, aroused a healthy state of agnosticism which has led to a logical distinction between Matter and Spirit. Indeed, my own interest in Spiritualism was awakened in the first instance by Sensitives with whom I came in contact during the course of my work, and subsequently confirmed by personal experiences of a psychic nature while on active service during the last war, which impressed on me a conviction that cremation was destined to play a great part in removing from human minds the erroneous theological conception of a physical resurrection in the remote future, which only a speedy and complete dissolution could dispel.

Apart from the now generally recognised hygienic advantage of cremation from the public health standpoint—especially in populous areas or during an epidemic—together with its psychological effect in removing from our minds a morbid contemplation of the long-drawn-out horrors of putrefaction associated with burial, cremation accords with religion and sentiment in a way that can best be stated by quoting the words of Sir Henry Thompson (father of the modern cremation movement) when making his first public appeal for the adoption of this mode of disposal in the year 1874:

"One of the many social questions waiting to be solved, and which must be solved at no very remote period, is: Which of the various forms of treatment of the dead is best for survivors? The answer is easy and simple. Do that which is done in all good work of every kind—follow nature's indication, and do the work she does, but do it better and more rapidly. In order to meet a possible objection to the substitution of cremation for burial, let me observe that the former is equally susceptible with the latter of association with religious funeral rites, if not more so. Never could the solemn and touching words, 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' be more appropriately uttered than over a body about to be consigned to the retort; while, with a view to metaphor, the dissipation of almost the whole body in the atmosphere in the ethereal form of gaseous matter is far more suggestive of another and a brighter life than the consignment of the body to the abhorred prison of the tomb."

In the course of its development during the past half century, cremation has acquired a symbology expressed in terms of Life—and not death. "Mors Janua Vitae" is inscribed on the portals of the chapel at Golders Green, and this expression is reflected within its precincts and at all modern crematoria by the absence of gloom or any note of despondency in the ceremony. It is also reflected in the perennial beauty of the Garden of Rest or Remembrance which surround them, and in which the song of birds, the whispering of trees and the ever changing succession of flowers in their season convey their message of the continuity of life and the all wise and all loving care of the Creator.

GEORGE A. NOBLE.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

By G. KENYON ROGERS

HOWEVER many Spiritualists may regard the principle of Personal Responsibility as one of the most important ideas of their "faith," wherein they differ from their orthodox brethren, it is quite possible that there are many who do not realise how very much older this doctrine is than they imagine it to be.

According to such fragments of the ancient Druidical teachings as have come down to us, human beings, in the long history of their evolution, originally fell from the angelic state in heaven ("gwynfyd") into "annwn," which is generally construed as being the lowest form of existence, whence they gradually rose through the various cycles of "abred," to their present state, in which they are free agents, masters of their own spiritual destinies. It is important to note that this was not considered to be a penalty imposed by God, but the inevitable consequence of the act itself.

The idea was that the state of "gwynfyd" could be attained only by passing through "abred," and "abred" could be obtained only through "annwn," thus embodying an idea of ceaseless progression for man. Traditionally, this state of "abred" equals the "coming and going of the Soul through the state of evil," in its progress towards perfection and bliss ("gwynfyd"). It should be noted that the expression "evil," as used here in Druidical teaching, is the equivalent of manifested existence and evolution in matter. There can be no Gwynfyd or state of Bliss without prevailing over evil and death and every opposition.

In his present state, man was held, on reaching the zenith of his progress through "abred," to be free once again, a free agent, master of his own spiritual destinies. If his soul willingly prefers good and abides by its choice, then at dissolution of the body it re-enters "gwynfyd" from which it fell. If, on the other hand, his soul prefers evil, it again lapses back into some cycle in "abred" best suited to purify it from such evil. In the main, man's destiny was all along entirely in his own hands.

But this fascinating study of the ancient Druidical teachings, with their many points of resemblance to the Ancient Wisdom of the East, cannot be fully developed here. Sufficient has been said to show that the Soul of man was, even at that remote date, considered to be free to choose between good and evil.

The idea that this principle lived right down through the ages, where any pretence of learning existed, seems to receive support in the emergence, in the person of Pelagios (cir. 360—450 A.D.) who, in asserting that man possessed free-will—and was not "born in iniquity"—seemed to be voicing the ancient teachings of his fathers.

Pelagios is the Greek form of the Cymric "Morgan," both meaning "born by the sea," and he is generally considered to have been of British origin. He might be said to have been one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of those master-minds that brought back to Europe, in a purified form, the religion they had received from it—for it was not St. Augustine who first brought Christianity to England.

As Abbott of Bangor, Morgan had already put forward his principle of free-will, and for this had been deposed by the Gaulist Bishop of Auxerre—whom the more orthodox section of the British Church had called in to assist in squashing this "heresy."

When Pelagios first arrived in Rome (cir. 405) after his deposition, he was amazed at the low state of morals and of life generally, and on remarking on this he was met with the excuse of human weakness. It was in his desire to counter this plea that he again developed his thesis of the power inherent in human nature of free-will to choose between good and evil, and out of this there developed the natural corollary of personal responsibility.

Against this the great Augustine, with all the forces of orthodoxy behind him, waged fierce battle. Himself

once a Manichean, he put forward the prevailing doctrine that man was naturally depraved and was the victim of original sin, through the fall of Adam.

Pelagios, on the other hand, held that man should be aware of his own responsibility—that he possessed inherent ability to adhere to the highest code of moral teaching attributed to God, and, where free-will existed, wherewith such choice could be made, no such sin could be said to exist. By free-will in this sense was meant "liberty of indifference," or "power of contrary choice" in every moment of life. Alternatively, sin is a thing of the will, not of nature.

By this native ability, the aid of the Holy Spirit—or of Christianity as then put forward—would appear to be rendered unnecessary. Nevertheless, Pelagios himself did not entirely eliminate the gift of "grace," although he would not allow it as the initial determining factor in salvation, but attributed to the unassisted human will-power to accept or reject the proffered salvation of Christ.

A REVOLUTIONARY DOCTRINE

This revolutionary doctrine, although it threatened to supersede "grace" by nature and thereby deny all immediate divine influence, and so render Christianity practically useless, might not have come so prominently to the front had not it been taken up by a much younger man, Coelestius.

This man—an Italian, trained as a lawyer—carried on the fight into a region of argumentative speculation which Pelagios himself would never have ventured to penetrate. Fortunately, we have been left with a record of the charges which were made against Coelestius at a Synod summoned by Aurelius, the then Bishop of Carthage whence Pelagios and Coelestius had fled from Rome when that unhappy city was stormed by the Goths in 410 A.D.

These charges give us a better idea of the claims put forward in the Pelagian "heresy" and more exactly how they appeared in the eyes of the Church Fathers than perhaps anything else could do. They read as follows:

- 1.—That Adam would have died even if he had not sinned.
- 2.—That the sin of Adam injured himself alone, not the human race.
- 3.—That new-born children are in the same condition in which Adam was before the Fall.
- 4.—That the whole human race does not die because of Adam's death or sin, nor will the race rise again because of the resurrection of Christ.
- 5.—That the law gives entrance to heaven as well as the gospel.

Occasionally a 7th was added thus:

- 7.—That infants, though unbaptised, have eternal life.

This Synod at Carthage finally condemned Coelestius and excommunicated him.

As the fight thickened, Augustine would seem to have advanced arguments of a nature far more towards the right than he might otherwise have done, but the kernel of his position was that, if taken to its logical sequence, the heretical teachings would result in the denial of the atonement and other central truths of revealed religion.

Meanwhile, Pelagios had proceeded to Palestine, where in 415 A.D., through the initiation of Augustine, a charge was laid against him, but with abortive results, partly through the former repudiating the more advanced teaching of his disciple. Carthage was not satisfied with this; and, after taking further steps, Augustine obtained an injunction against Pelagios from Pope Innocent in 416 A.D., but it was not until two years later that the final decree went forth that not only Pelagios and Coelestius, but all who accepted their opinions, should suffer confiscation of their goods and banishment.

WHAT OUR READERS ARE SAYING

DR. F. H. WOOD ON WAR FORECASTS

SIR,—I am glad reference has been made in *LIGHT* (August 1st) to Mr. Mitchell's astrological predictions, and to the forecasts made by the Rosemary Guides. Their importance is not merely to encourage us, but to test both the claims of astrology on the one hand and of spirit-prevision on the other.

I know nothing of astrology, but a careful survey of all the Rosemary forecasts made during this war has convinced me that a *Spirit-Intelligence Service is at work*, which could be used with advantage by our leaders, if they knew how to tap it properly. The main object of such contact appears to be a disclosure of what is in the mind of the enemy, rather than merely prophesying what may or may not happen. For instance, J.D.W. (my spirit-brother) showed that, had the foretold air-attacks in July been more successful, Hitler had intended to follow them up at once with invasion. They failed, and resort was made instead to massed air-attack on our shipping, also foretold. These and other details of enemy plans were disclosed to me *before they materialised*, and sent by me to a quarter where I hope they were found useful.

Plan after plan for invasion of this country has been made by the enemy, and thrown aside because Hitler's war-chiefs have not dared to use them. The insane Fuehrer has always been willing to risk everything, and his will may even yet prevail. We need have no fear, for it will fail, and the longer he leaves it the more completely it will fail.

Our most dangerous time is now past, and the question is no longer whether the Axis powers will be defeated, but how soon the disintegrating forces will bring about their inevitable collapse.

FREDERIC H. WOOD.

SIR A. C. DOYLE AND REINCARNATION

Sir,—In his letter in *LIGHT* of 18th July, Rev. C. L. Tweedale entirely ignores the statement made by the discarnate Conan Doyle affirming the truth of Reincarnation, which I quoted in my letter in *LIGHT* of 20th June, and which is presumably of a later date than the statements made to Mr. Tweedale. In the circumstances, it would be most interesting if Mr. Tweedale could again make contact with Conan Doyle and ask him to explain the clear contradiction.

On the question of the frequency of Reincarnation, the statements of the discarnate F. W. H. Myers in *Beyond Human Personality* are of great interest, viz.: "I am quite clear that those human beings who live almost wholly in the physical sense while on earth must be reborn in order that they may experience an intellectual and higher form of emotional life. In other words, those human beings I have described as 'animal-man' almost invariably reincarnate. Some of the individuals I have designated by the term 'soul-man' also choose to live again on earth. But metempsychosis does not involve a machine-like regularity of return . . . The majority of people only reincarnate two, three, or four times, though if they have some human purpose or plan to achieve they may return as many as eight or nine times."

W. HARRISON.

DOGMA

Sir,—In view of the continual attacks on "dogma" (by which Christian dogma is meant) may I call your attention to certain passages in Dr. Carl Jung's new book *The Integration of Personality*? Now that Freud and Adler are dead, Dr. Jung remains the leading European authority on psychoanalysis.

"The unconscious no sooner touches us than we are it, in that we become unconscious of ourselves. This is the primal danger, instinctively known and an object of fear to primitive men . . . So men's striving was turned to the fortification of consciousness. His rituals

and dogmatic conceptions served this purpose; they were dams and walls erected against the dangers of the unconscious, the 'perils of the soul' (p. 70, 71).

"Dogma advises us not to have an unconscious: therefore the Catholic way of life is completely unaware of psychological problems . . . mankind has never lacked powerful images to lend magic aid against the uncanny luring depths of the world and of the psyche: the figures of the unconscious have been expressed in protecting and healing images and thus expelled from the psyche into cosmic space" (p. 60).

Your readers must be aware that Nazidom is making the most terrific experiment ever known to control and mould the deep dark underworld of the unconscious mind of Germany, and to construct new dogmas about Aryan "Blood and Soil." Nature alters a vacuum, and, once Christian dogmas disappear, Hitler and Co. will be ready enough to provide sinister substitutes. Read S. Luke xi., 24-26, from the *psycho-analytic* point of view ("house" equals the human psyche) and remember that Jung is no theological "dogmatist," but one of the ablest intellects left on the Continent.

S. Martin's Vicarage, N.W.10.

A. H. E. LEE.

MRS. EILEEN GARRETT'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Few recent autobiographies have equalled in interest that of Mrs. Eileen J. Garrett, rightly described as "the celebrated international Medium." Although the title is *My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship*, the book is not restricted to the consideration of mediumship; on the contrary, it tells the story of a life full of human adventure and pathos, and tells it so well that when once the story has been begun there are few readers who will stop until the closing page has been reached.

For Spiritualists and Psychical Researchers the book has special interest; for, as its title suggests, it reveals the thoughts and experiences of a truly great Medium and discusses the psychic and human problems of mediumship from an angle probably never before attempted.

The book was first issued in America and it was the American edition that was reviewed in *LIGHT* by Mr. H. F. Prevost Battersby (November 30th, 1939). Recently, an English edition has been issued by Messrs. Rider and Co., at the reduced price of 10/6, which should ensure its introduction to a very wide circle of readers.

G.H.L.

THE BISHOP AND THE EVIDENCE

As noted in *LIGHT* last week, the Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. David) recently issued a warning in his *Diocesan Leaflet* to bereaved people against recourse to Spiritualism for evidence of the survival of their loved ones, chiefly on the ground "that a Christian ought to be content with what the Gospel reveals."

In view of this warning, it is interesting to record that, after the issue of the latest edition of the Rev. C. L. Tweedale's famous book, *Man's Survival After Death*, in which the spiritualistic evidence is set out very fully and convincingly, a note appeared in the *Leaflet*, of which the Bishop is the Editor, recommending the book to the clergy of the diocese and ending with the words: "We must now leave the heaven to work."

Men serving in His Majesty's Forces, who are interested in Evidence for Survival, may have free literature sent to them on application to

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Light

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EDITOR

GEORGE H. LETHEM

AS WE SEE IT

SPIRITUALISM—ANCIENT AND MODERN

MRS. St. Clair Stobart has rendered many services to the Spiritualist movement, but none greater than by insisting, in books and addresses, that whilst the organised movement is modern, Spiritualism itself is as old as human history. In her address published in last week's issue of LIGHT some of the evidence for this conclusion was summarised.

There is good reason to believe, as Mrs. Stobart has often emphasised, that the inner teaching of the ancient Mystery Religions was spiritualistic in the double sense that it not only proclaimed human Survival as a fact, but also demonstrated the reality of the spiritual body, the possession of which by men makes Survival possible. Always, in the ancient Religions and Philosophies (as Miss Charlotte E. Woods showed in a recent London Spiritualist Alliance lecture to be published in LIGHT soon), proof that there is something in Man which can survive the death and destruction of the physical body was regarded as an indispensable basis for belief in Survival or for acceptance of evidence pointing to Survival. True, the evidence by which the reality of the spiritual body was proved was known only by the few—just as, for different reasons, it is now; but the knowledge, though kept secret, was never allowed to disappear; it was handed down from Initiate to Initiate through all the ages, even to our own day.

A detailed description of the process by which Temple Neophytes were taught and trained for initiation in Egypt, the home of the most ancient Mysteries, is given in that remarkable book, *Winged Pharaoh*, by Joan Grant (of which a new edition has been issued by Methuen and Co., at the reduced price of 5/-). Written in the first person, as if dictated by Sekeeta, the First Dynasty princess who, through Initiation, became the "Winged Pharaoh" (that is, Pharaoh whose spiritual body could leave her physical body and fly wherever she wished to go), the book has the characteristics of an inspirational or communicated work, and we believe it is agreed that the descriptions of the Temple scenes are accepted as conforming to all that is known regarding ancient Egyptian esoteric teaching.

Sekeeta tells how, under the guidance of a wise and trusted old Priest, she was first taught to regard her physical body as the temple of the spiritual body; then how, by veridical dreams and induced travelling clairvoyance, she was accustomed to the idea that the spiritual body could carry the conscious mind to any distance from the physical body; and finally, how the spiritual body could leave the physical body and journey either in the earth-world or the spirit-world and bring back knowledge of what it saw and heard.

Only after this—at the end of many years of rigorous training—came the Initiation, and that included voluntarily leaving her physical body for four days and consciously facing many problems and dangers in various regions of the spirit-world, very much as described and suggested by the words and music of the well-known opera, "The Magic Flute." This ordeal safely accomplished, she is "Winged" and becomes the "Winged Pharaoh."

Parallels to all the experiences described by Sekeeta can be found in modern psychic literature—although these experiences are isolated and not, as in her case, part of a long course of Initiation. Veridical dreams

(Continued at foot of next column)

SURVIVAL AND THE WAY OF LIFE

By H. A. DALLAS

I HAVE been asked by Major Webster to comment on his recent interesting article in LIGHT. In this he suggested that, if Survival is so absolutely proved that no one can doubt it, the effect might be to weaken the desire for Righteousness for its own sake; that many might cease to "hunger and thirst for Righteousness," being content to know that they will survive death. In order to estimate the value of this suggestion we must consider facts of experience.

We all know those who are entirely convinced of Survival, which they had doubted previous to their study of Spiritualism and Psychical Research. What effect has this conviction had on them? Do we find that it has lowered their spiritual standard, that they are satisfied merely with belief in Survival? Is it not true that, like Myers, they feel that mere survival is an undesirable prospect? It is progress they desire, and the recognition that progress beyond depends largely on the kind of life lived on earth stimulates them to self-control and service.

There are many who already have the assurance that Survival is a fact; further scientific proof can hardly make that assurance stronger than it is. Surely, experience shows that this assurance does not make them less earnestly to desire to grow in Righteousness and to help others to do so.

If some are at a lower level and think more of consequences than of the attainment of purity and love, we must remember that God's method of training is by consequences. All through the process of Evolution it is by consequences that the survival of the fittest has been assured, and the animal world, as well as humanity, has been taught to seek conformity to the Will of God, which is manifested in the laws of nature. We are not wiser than God; our methods must copy His.

If a man is led by the fear of hell to consider his ways, that may be the first step on the upward way. If, instead of fearing hell, he discovers that life does not end at death, that discovery also, maybe, is a step on the way to God and may help him to right living, until he can say with St. Francis Xavier: "Not with the hope of gaining aught, not seeking a reward," he aspires to reach the higher life of love. The man who wrote that hymn was startled into considering his ways by the words: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his Soul."

There is another consideration to be borne in mind. What is the kind of proof demanded by men of science before they accept an alleged fact? And what is the sort of evidence on which a jury reach a verdict and a judge pronounces a sentence? If we ask either of these they will tell us it is cumulative evidence, not some one crucial experiment.

Survival will be accepted ultimately on the same grounds and will be held much more firmly and more widely than it could be if the assertion of this fact rested on a single test.

(Continued from previous column)

are often described; verified cases of travelling clairvoyance (sometimes induced by hypnotic suggestion) are numerous; and authenticated cases of conscious out-of-the-body experiences can be counted by the hundred. The modern evidence fully proves the credibility of the witnesses who describe the ancient Initiation ceremonial and experiences; and the nature of these ancient experiences demonstrates that the two essentials of modern spiritualistic teaching—the reality of the soul-body and its continuance as the vehicle of conscious individual life after the death of the physical body—possess all the force and dignity given by ancient use and justifies the claim that they are the underlying essentials and prerequisites of all true Religion.

THE PSYCHIC THREAD

THE SOUL OF INDIA

INDIA'S transcendental philosophies have long had a remarkable influence upon English thought. The political association between our two countries has brought us increasingly into close contact. Powerful Northern intellects, as varied as Sir Edwin Arnold's and Allan Bennett's, have been drawn into the Buddhist Temple, nor has Hindooism been a less dominant force in our spiritual development. Rabindranath Tagore penetrated deeply into the consciousness of Britain, and he was not alone. Yet another distinguished Hindoo poet and mystic, Anilbaran Roy, has now contributed his "Orient pearls at random strung" to our Eastern library.

His *Songs from the Soul* (1), rendered by himself into graceful English prose and verse, will help many to a clearer understanding of whatever is best and purist in Hindoo philosophy. "The Divine Mother" (for to her this poet's heart has turned with especial devotion) looks out on us with infinite compassion from these pages; her's is the hand stretched forth to lead us into the atmosphere of that selfless quietism which is the last stage of the Hindoo's earthly pilgrimage. Here is the technique (Yoga); here the path, "so simple, yet so difficult!"; the ultimate goal is that of all mystics the world over, Union. "Peace is the foundation on which the edifice of spiritual life is to be built—peace, deep and unshakable, pervading every part of the being." This in a world lacerated by monstrous war! Yet the "foundation" cannot be moved by earthly tempests.

Resignation of the ego, absorption in the Divine, of such is the essence of this theosophy. But here is no Masochism, like Kierkegaard's (see *Psychic Thread*, 25th July): "People think there is a special merit in suffering and that all enjoyment is a sort of sin; so they turn away from the joys of life and deliberately inflict misery and suffering upon themselves. That is not our path. To us, all suffering is due to ignorance and is a sign of imperfection. It is the Divine in us who tastes our joys, and it is on the Divine in us that we inflict our sufferings . . . I will not discourage the yearning of my soul for beauty and joy."

STRANGE TALES

Mr. John Jayne Westroppe's *Strange Tales and Stray Songs* (2) spring from the inexhaustible fountain of Romance; the faerie-foam arisen from its occult depths clings to them; there is an eerie, other-world music in his stanzas that touches the present with the ghostly fingers of the past. That these metric tales remind us of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's ballads is no matter: their source is Rossetti's source, and the new poet has handled the material of his art with as much originality as the old. Not that Mr. Westroppe has drunk deep, as Rossetti did, of that well of eternal life-giving water, which is the Philosophy of Love (3); it is the mediaeval mystery of poetic form and substance which he has taken for his spiritual mistress, as Rossetti did in *Rose Mary* and *Sister Helen*. But whereas the one found his soul's earthly food chiefly in the early Italian poets, the other has drunk from French fountains—and be it remembered that Provence and France, *langue d'oc* and *langue d'oïl*, were the parents of all Europe's romantic literature. The last was Chaucer's source, and Mr. Westroppe has well and wisely enriched his vocabulary from Chaucer's immense treasury, and possesses not a little of his innate epic mastery.

Reading these wonderful poems—and the adjective may be used in its true sense; for 'tis the reader's wonder they excite—who will not be moved to something like conviction that their author once moved and had his being amid scenes akin to those he describes, and that the memories of an earlier incarnation throng

about him in his hours of inspiration? And like one of his "characters" we know that he "wrote in secret; and received the secret answer." There are profound thoughts, too, scattered like pale anemones along the woodways of Romance; of these is the last line of "The Last Abbott," the *great* poem of this collection: ". . . We cannot all be Heroes—No, nor Men."

VICTOR B. NEUBURG

These *Strange Tales* have led me to think of another poet, a poet of occult things, when the mood was on him, a poet of rare spiritual power, one of the most original and melodious singers of our times—the late Victor Neuburg. His death, a few weeks ago, after a long illness, has brought his spirit very near to those who had known the man, revered his learning and loved his lyrics. Neuburg of "The Vine Press" was an individual among individualists, a bizarre personality with a noble intelligence, a passionate warmth of affection, and a psychic temperament which opened his inner eye and ear to the wild, lovely forms, hues and harmonies of those enigmatic presences that haunt certain streams and woodlands hallowed in remote times to their worship. There was, in truth, something "elementary" about the poet himself, something elfin and non-human which one sensed immediately, and this elementary atmosphere of his contrasted strongly and sometimes even rudely with the astonishing breadth and depth of his scholarship. The two characters united to produce the phenomenon of his verse.

Perhaps Neuburg's finest poems are to be found in the volumes entitled *The Triumph of Pan* and *Songs of the Groves*, though some little masterpieces are scattered alike through anonymous *recueils* from the Vine Press and certain rare journals of unusual character. The Occult is seldom, if ever, deliberately revealed in his verse, but it lies just below the surface in his major achievements and haunts many a frailer piece with its age-old memories. He does not write of magic, but there is magic at the root of most of his writings. That he printed much of his best poetry anonymously on his own press may account for the comparative obscurity in which his brilliant productions still remain, but his name is a famous one where public advertisement is not deemed an obligatory passport to poetic renown. To scholars, Neuburg's translations from the Greek and Latin will remain things to praise, to students of the poetic art his feats of virtuosity in rhyme and rhythm are things to wonder at, while to those whose spirits seek the hidden springs of inspiration his poetry is a perpetual fount of world-forgetfulness: "Come unto the shadowy pools; Night's silver ring chains thee," for

"Here are silences

Profounder than deep death. Thou canst not hear
Even the murmur of the Atmosphere
Borne on the wings of the delightful breeze
Of Night." (4).

To what heights, what harmonies, will such a soul as Victor Neuburg's swiftly soar, freed at last from the prison-house of suffering mortality! The path of an unfettered poet in the ether is as a comet's trail in the firmament.

C. R. CAMMELL.

- (1) Published by John M. Watkins: London, 21 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road, W.C.2.; 2/6.
- (2) Published by L. Forster Jones, 37 Bury Road, Epping, Essex.
- (3) See *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Philosophy of Love*, by C. R. Cammell: Edinburgh, The Poseidon Press, 1933.
- (4) "Panthea"; *Songs of the Groves*; *Records of the Ancient World*; The Vine Press, Steyning, Sussex. 1921.

4—BRINGING FIRE DOWN FROM HEAVEN

By Captain Q. CRAUFURD

AFTER my earlier experiments with electrical apparatus, which it seemed to me had produced most encouraging results, I was introduced by the communicators to planchette. There seemed to be a Master Mind who directed my researches up to a point and then left me once I had got upon the right track.

I described some of this in articles published in *LIGHT* at the time. This Master Mind would give me no name, nor would he give any promise to return. He appears to have returned to give help when it was urgent, for private reasons; I was then told help was being given by a "High Spirit," but again no name was given. I pressed for an answer and was told: "You know me not"—this by planchette, under my own hand, clear and distinct though at that time planchette refused to work for me at all under ordinary conditions.

The lesson to be learned from this seems to be that we cannot expect to control any unseen mind higher than ourselves. It is simple common sense and makes me laugh at "research officers" who tackle this subject with their own conceit.

Now, it would have been very simple for the High Spirit to have told me to leave the Ark of the Covenant alone; and, if he had done so I would have obeyed orders. On the contrary, he encouraged me to continue my line of research.

One of the first things I discussed by means of planchette was the reality of thought transference. The Medium being tired physically one evening, the writing produced was very difficult to read; and, as power weakened, it became worse. Finally, an important question was answered in writing so difficult that all we could make out was the ending, "sorry to write so badly, goodnight." The Medium left for London the following morning and I spent several days trying to decipher the script.

In the end I had to give it up; and then, at last, it struck me that if indeed the communicator was anxious to help, I might appeal to him direct without the use of planchette. I therefore asked him if he could help me to decipher the message. It was an experiment which produced a definite result. Within an hour of sending my appeal to one "Marshall," a definite personality interested in the Medium, I received the answer clear and distinct while I was engaged in cleaning my car. It came as an inspiration. A certain sentence began to form in my mind.

I ran into the house and, taking the script, was then able to trace letter by letter the exact answer which had come into my mind, at a moment's notice; engaged on mechanical work, my mind had been blank.

This was a great discovery. I am no Medium, but there are, apparently, certain conditions under which I can receive as clearly as if by direct voice. If this is so in my case, it must be possible with all ordinary people.

What are the conditions? Can they be deliberately produced? I fancy this was one of the chief uses of an "Ark." When charged and discharged rhythmically at the right period—that is to say when tuned to the right wave length—it produced an ark visible as a soft glow or "glory," the effect of which was to put the human mind in touch with the ultra-human.

Along this line I have experimented with encouraging results.

In some ways the effect may be analogous to a narcotic and bring the nerves into a suitable condition for reception, blotting out the material world to some extent. "Reaction" would, I think, be the right word to use.

The Ark caused the observer to react to the vibrations of a higher plane. It is a guess, of course, but the guess is supported by a great many experiments. Wireless waves do act upon the nervous mechanism; they are capable of destroying the directive instincts of earlier

waves—for instance, when near a transmitting station. That is common knowledge.

We know nothing about the wisdom of the ancient sages because they kept their knowledge, wisely perhaps, to themselves.

We know well what have been the results of sowing modern science broadcast to the common people—they have used it recklessly for the construction of armaments and the display of ruthless force.

The plan of the ancient sages was to wrap their wisdom up in mythology. To the common people these were fairy tales of gods and heroes. Prometheus, who brought the divine fire down from heaven, was evidently some early experimenter who, like Franklin in more modern days, brought electricity down to earth from the clouds. He passed into poetry and was lost in mists of folklore. The only way we have of finding a key to the hidden mysteries is by repeating the observations of nature and natural laws which give colour to the myth.

How is it, for instance, that the Arabian name for the torpedo fish, "ra-ed," signifies lightning? Is it a mere coincidence that the "electric eel" is connected with Electra "the shining one?" It is no more a coincidence than the fact that the Ark constructed by Moses was capable of storing electricity from the clouds, and that the ascending column of vapour from a sacrifice is ionised and therefore conducting air.

In the myth of Electra and her twin brother, Orestes, I can trace the knowledge that Electricity and Magnetism were twins, acting often apparently in opposition, but mutually coming together in the presence of the divine oracles. These are Greek Gods, but they must have had their Egyptian and Babylonian counterparts.

Remember that in these present days, Commercial Prosperity is the chief god we moderns worship. We care little enough about the great forces hidden in our skies, except perhaps when we pray to be delivered from lightning and tempest.

It may not have been so always. The use of atmospheric electricity as a blessing may have been known to more people than Prometheus, and the time may yet come when the worship of the Golden Calf will give place to Nature Worship, or the adoration of "Our Father which art in Heaven," who has been said to be perfect and to send His rain upon the good and the evil alike.

Is not this the true and only covenant? Is it not the very case of Spiritualism? Is it not beautifully symbolised by the Ark, which is a material casket to contain for a brief space some portion of the great emotional creative Force?

OVERCOMING FEAR

MISS H. A. Dallas sends the following extract from a letter written by a man who served with distinction in the war of 1914-18.

"Fear! The worst moment I had in the war was at night on the Salonika front. I was walking alone in pitch darkness from one of my company posts. I had five little self-contained redoubts at intervals of half a mile or so, with nothing but barbed wire entanglements between—not like the trenches in France. Suddenly, a rather violent shelling from the enemy took place on my lines, and shells were bursting all round. At night, seeing only the brilliant flashes, and not the smoke and earth, one had no idea where or how near they really were. I had one bad moment when I felt inclined to grovel on the ground and give way to sheer terror (the loneliness and the darkness got my nerves a bit). It would in fact have been sound and proper tactics to lie flat, but I realised that if I gave way at all I should do so badly, and though there was no one there to see, I knew I should feel horrid about it ever after. So I simply had to force myself to walk deliberately on; and lo! after a minute I felt quite all right again. Rum thing, fear."

CHURCH'S GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

MRS. M. A. Stobart, in her very illuminating and thought-compelling article, "Humanity's Cross-roads," touches on a point of supreme importance—namely, the deplorable neglect of science to explore and train the psychic faculties in those gifted by nature. Mrs. Stobart puts it "to cater for the welfare and evolution of the spirit-body," which nature, the All-creative Spirit, has placed in our physical bodies for a set purpose. This purpose, intended for upward evolution of immensely more importance, has been criminally neglected or driven under by the over-enthusiastic discovery of purely physical evolution.

Such men as Huxley, Ray Lancaster, Keith and others, if they had used a fraction of their talent for the study of the psychic faculties instead of ignoring and being even antagonistic, might have achieved a beneficent influence on the scientific thought of the last half-century. Instead, German philosophers, not always original, have unfortunately read into the discoveries of our great thinkers, Darwin and Wallace, a basis for their destructive theories leading to such philosophy as was put forward by Nietzsche and the like, forming some excuse for what we see in the world to-day.

Mrs. Stobart rightly places a great part of the responsibility of such a sad and criminal neglect on the leaders of the Church, who should be the natural custodians of the spiritual upward trend of evolution through the facts of the physical body being only the envelope of the spiritual body, the eternal or surviving part of our physical creation.

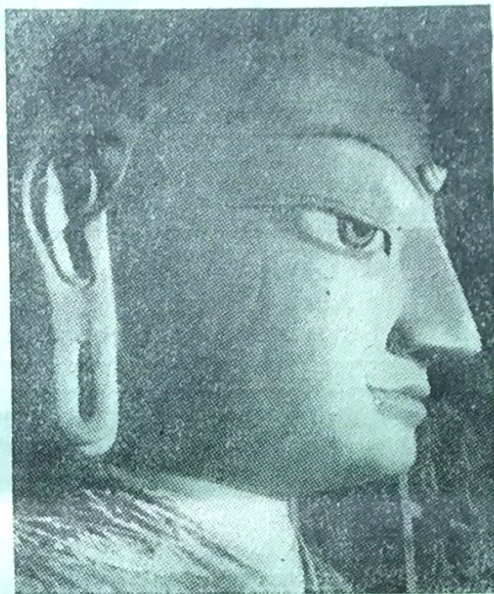
Fortunately for the world's ultimate redemption, other great scientists, greater than those who caught the limelight through opposition, have been contemporary in a more far-seeing investigation and research into the Spiritual. Such truly great thinkers as Dr. Russel Wallace—the modest co-author with Darwin of the doctrine of Natural Selection as put forward by Darwin in his famous book, *The Origin of Species*—who saw the spiritual in man and wrote thereon in his books, was joined by Sir Wm. Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Wm. Barrett and others of world-wide reputation, who have given us works of inestimable value, so that all who care may satisfy themselves of the great purpose of creative spirit for the upward evolution of mankind, which not being easily understood has not commanded the popular mind.

The Church is carrying an immense burden of responsibility. Some of its leaders see the result of this neglect of the scientific investigation of the truly spiritual in nature and the true teaching of the Founder of Christianity and St. Paul; but owing to the taboo of the higher dignitaries, who are still clinging to the mediaeval traditions and their system of patronage, are unprepared to come out into the open to preach what has been discovered of psychics by the more enlightened clergy. Even the majority must doubtless see the results of the Churches' neglect of this advanced scientific thought. The Churches, therefore, although seeing their responsibility, have not the moral courage to "go to it" and prove for themselves the facts and evidence of the survival of personality while they sometimes preach on the survival of the species.

If men in the Church, as Dr. Barnes (Bishop of Birmingham) and other enlightened men with influence would preach on the subject of the spirit, psychic faculties, the great purpose in the human body of such faculties as clairvoyance, clairaudience and the gifts of tongues (as Paul mentions in the 10th verse of the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians, the writer having heard in the house of a well-known doctor five spirits speaking simultaneously in four languages, Arabic, French, German and English, an account of which was published in *LIGHT* some twenty years ago) the power and influence of the Church would be mighty for the higher evolution which would ultimately save the world from the destructive forces now prevailing.

JULIUS F. GEMS.

LAND OF A



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