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YOU AND I AND THE NIT-WIT

By Major ALAN HOWGRAVE-GRAHAM, Pretoria

DEFINITIONS

NIT-WIT. A person who is devoid of ideas, imagination, or intellectual background, possessed of a commonplace, bromidic, conventional mind; (2) One of atrophied or undeveloped intellectual faculties, of fossilized mentality, intellectually impotent.

NITWITTEDNESS. The Condition of mental poverty, intellectual barrenness and impotence, and dearth of ideas appertaining to the Nit-wit.

NITWITITY. The stereotyped attitude of mind and outlook of the Nit-wit towards anything not traditional or habitual or conventional, and therefore inapprehensible by him (her).

NITWITISM. Any characteristic utterance, observation, argument, or *ipse dixit* of a Nit-wit.

NITWITIDOM. The general world of Nit-wits, the social, religious and intellectual strata in which Nit-wits flourish and abound.

(NOTE.—In the ensuing observations "he" includes "she," especially, expressly, and very emphatically).

* * *

EVERY person who has made personal enquiry into, or has established contact with, what we commonly call psychic phenomena, sooner or later, and usually sooner, encounters the Nit-wit. He abounds in all ranks and walks of society. He is by no means to be confused with the subnormal or feeble-minded person, the mental defective in a pathological sense. On the contrary, he is more often than not efficient and capable in his own line of life. We meet the Nit-wit as an excellent accountant, or architect, or hospital matron, or motor-mechanic, or solicitor, or civil servant, or textile manufacturer, or masseuse, or secretary. He (she) may be a decent husband (wife) and even a passable parent—of sorts. But outside trade and family—nitwittedness, and nothing else.

As nitwitivity is found in all trades, professions, and social circles, so Nitwitidom is not peculiar to any one country or people; as an institution, it is cosmopolitan. For instance, in South Africa, it is not only indigenous to the soil, but is cultivated on the grand scale by mass-production in the schools and the universities, just as it is elsewhere so cultivated.

For the typical nit-wit is what we call an educated person. Naturally! That is largely why he is a nit-

wit; it is not *in spite of*, but rather *because of* his education that he is so. He was "educated"—that is, hounded through various academic examinations—by professional nit-wits. The average teacher is the main-stay and prop, not to say the *fons et origo*, of Nitwitidom itself. She (for we put her sex an easy first this time) as a rule crawls myopically along that little one-track pedagogic rut, without an idea outside it. Her intellectual horizon is bounded by a few French genders and Latin verbs, this and that short method in Arithmetic, the date of the Edict of Nantes, and why (if it is) the Whoang-ho is called China's sorrow. Such she deems to be the only facts worth knowing, the only subjects worth study, the only knowledge worth imparting, the only things worth thinking about. Oh yes, he, too! "He" is a good second to "she," very often.

Now every Spiritualist and every psychical investigator who has proved survival of the so-called dead and communications with them to be facts is, to his exasperation, constantly encountering the Nit-wit. That is not to say what some of us call the Theodore, not the ingenious inventor of fantastic suppositions to try and explain away what I prefer to call not paranormal but parapsychical phenomena non-spiritistically; nitwittedness is not the trouble with such as he. Such are not barren of ideas, unfortunately. On the contrary, they are full of ideas, the only defect in which is that they are grotesquely impossible.

Moreover, the Theodores have usually made some sort of a show of studying psychic phenomena. Often they have gone as far as having a sample seance. They have even perhaps read an article or two here, and a book or two there, on the subject, or if not going quite so far as to read about it, at least they have *written* about it.

Not so the nit-wit. He has never read a single word on the subject; he would scorn to waste his time on such rubbish. He has never attended a single seance; he would not dream of throwing away his money on such nonsense. So of course he is omniscient about it.

Now the average person, especially if one who has previously disbelieved in survival, who by means of spiritistic experiences acquires proof that it is true, almost always feels strongly impelled to give all and sundry the benefit of his own experience. It is entirely natural and creditable, but probably most of us recognise that when this was our own case, we were at that time over-inclined to let our enthusiasm run away with us. Then let an old hand at the game give a piece of serious advice to every new convert: it is

NEVER ARGUE SPIRITUALISM WITH A NIT-WIT.

You will not convince *him*, because he is constitutionally unconvinced, and *he* will annoy *you* because . . . well, because he is what he is. More often than not it is he who broaches the subject if he has any idea that you are interested. His opening gambit is to ask in apparent guileless good faith, and as a genuine earnest enquirer,

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for information on the subject of spiritualistic phenomena. But that is all boloney; he wants nothing of the sort. What he wants is that you should give him an excuse or opportunity for fitting off one or more of the following characteristic nitwitisms:

"Spiritualism is all humbug and superstition."

"Spiritualists usually end up in a lunatic asylum. Father Ditherer says so in the last parish magazine."

"Mediums are greasy frauds who make a fortune out of the credulity and sentimentality of their deluded victims."

"Messages through Mediums are always trivial, commonplace, and un instructive."

Or, if you reply by citing case after case of the Medium who accepts no money, "Then they do it for notoriety. Any way, paid or unpaid, they are nasty, morbid, unwholesome people who work themselves up into fits and foam at the mouth."

If you tell him that a Medium has given you communications concerning your private affairs known only to yourself, it is you yourself who must have told the Medium about these things previously and forgotten all about it. That's when your bearings get heated, and perhaps you say "Please at least give me credit for not being a congenital idiot; I did nothing of the sort." "Oh well," he then says, "I suppose she made enquiries about you from some one." Or perhaps, "Then they do it all by Telepathy; the Society for Psychical Research said so years ago." Or—"Coincidence, just coincidence."

"Materialisations and that sort of thing are just conjuring and trickery. Maskelyne and Harry Price found that out long ago. My second cousin's father-in-law says that a man named Browning once found yards of butter-muslin in the gullet of a Medium named Sludge."

"Voices through trumpets! Why every one knows they are nothing but Ventriloquism."

"No one connected with me would ever want to speak through some coarse uneducated woman like a spiritualistic Medium. Only the other day the Vicar was saying in his sermon that when spirits seem to be talking through Mediums, it is evil spirits sent by Satan trying to deceive us by pretending to be our dear

ones departed in the Lord. All these phenomena, he said, are diabolical in origin—temptations of the Devil." If you fall into the trap and say that you do not believe in the Devil, he says that he cannot discuss sacred things with an atheist.

Now here is an excellent rule, which I try myself to observe, and which I commend to all who have been entrapped into this kind of argument by a nit-wit:

When a given person has said a single one of these or similar silly things, never again be enticed into a discussion of the subject with that person. In case he himself should endeavour to revive it, as sooner or later he most likely will, keep this article by you to lend to him. He may be a bit cool in his manner afterwards, but he won't trouble you again.

But avoid these discussions altogether if you can. Some nineteen hundred years or so ago, a very wise Teacher, sitting on a rock on the slope of a hill in Palestine, gave his listeners the following sound advice:

"Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again, and rend YOU."

If, for purposes of present context, for "swine" you read "nit-wits," the advice is as sound to-day as it was then.

POLICY OF THE S.P.R.

MR. BENISON has missed the mark. My letter of January 23rd is not answered by the quotation from Sir Oliver Lodge (LIGHT, February 6th). In my letter, I showed unanswerably how the Society for Psychical Research cannot be now regarded either as an authority or court of appeal in matters psychic or objectively spiritual. For, on its own showing, it now refuses officially to give any decision concerning the phenomena or their implications.

The practical point at issue is not what the public may think of the Society's attitude and work a hundred years hence, but what they have been thinking and are thinking now, and the kind of influence the Society is having on belief in Survival, in the spirit-world, and in human destiny. The influence of the Society has, of late years, tended to act injuriously on such belief, and has provided a veritable house of refuge for those who, for various reasons, oppose the modern evidence for Survival and the spirit-world.

The Society has been used by those members of the Churches who oppose all modern evidence for these things and who have constantly said, as I have heard their lecturers say: "These things are not proven; we must wait for the decision of the Society for Psychical Research," well knowing that an official decision would never be given, and hoping in this way to put off indefinitely the, to them, evil day of acknowledgment, markedly ignoring the fact that their own religion was based on similar happenings to those they were denying.

Again, on the other hand, this Society has been used by Agnostics, Materialists, and others among the psychically destitute, in their efforts to kill belief in the psychic and spiritual. In this way, coupled with their cold-shouldering of Survival, the influence of the Society has for many years been antagonistic to the spiritual.

The object of my letter in LIGHT for January 23rd last was to show to Spiritualists and the members of the Christian Churches that they need not in future take any notice whatsoever of this Society, whose official motto for a long time past appears to have been: "Not Proven, and we hope it never will be."

Survival after bodily death has been scientifically proved up to the hilt long ago by scientific evidence, as Sir Oliver Lodge has said; and the phenomena of and connected with Survival—including apparitions, clairvoyance, clairaudience, materialisation and psychic photography—have been proved likewise long ago. The Society, in the 58 years of its existence, has proved none of these things. The proof has been achieved without its aid and it never has justified its existence or the original intention of its founders.

CHARLES L. TWEEDALE,
Vicar of Weston, Yorkshire.

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MORE ABOUT PREDICTION AND FREE-WILL

By W. HARRISON

AS my article on this subject in LIGHT of 19th December has given rise to some discussion, and also some misunderstanding, some further observations on the subject may be useful.

In reply to the two correspondents who comment upon it in LIGHT of 23rd January, I would refer them again to the remarks of Professor J. H. Hyslop, quoted in my article, which show the effect of a consideration of the problem on the mind of a professional logician. Neither of these correspondents appears to be versed in the philosophical writings on the subject of Determinism or Free-will, nor do they appear to have studied my recent article in conjunction with my previous article on the problem of long-range predictions, in which some of the points which they now raise were dealt with. I would therefore draw their attention to the following paragraph in that article :

"In commenting upon Dunne's theory, Dr. Van Tricht remarks: 'Such a perception is a true prophecy, unless, by either an intentional or an unintentional action of the free-will, the course deviates and misses those events.' The objection to this observation is, however, that in a true long-range prophecy, any deviation from a particular course of action, and the outcome of the deviation, would be foreseen and would not affect the *ultimate* destiny. Thus if, by way of example, an intending passenger by the liner *Titanic* received, on the eve of sailing, a premonitory warning of disaster to the vessel and cancelled his passage in consequence, such action might be in keeping with his destined life-course, which would not include a tragic death at sea."

In this connection, it may be observed that, although a warning of impending disaster may be received, the individual concerned may not be in a position to alter his course of action. The necessity of rigid adherence to duty may leave him no choice in the matter.

The correspondents referred to have failed to appreciate that, as mentioned in my second article, there are several distinct classes of predictions which present different problems.

PREDICTIONS BY SPIRIT-BEINGS

The predictions made by spirit-beings who have deliberately planned a series of actions and events, which they fully expect will result in the fulfilment of the plan, cannot be said to be true cases of precognition of the long-range class. When successful, they have all the semblance of infallibility, although they may be no more than highly intelligent anticipations, not amounting to absolute certainty. In this connection, reference may be made to the "No War" prophecies of 1939, the failure of which was explained by one spirit-guide as being due to the intrusion of a factor which they had been quite unable to foresee—*viz.*, a last-minute brain-storm of Hitler, which precipitated the conflict which they had exercised the greatest spirit-influence to avert.

In which class of prediction the case of Sir Oliver Lodge and his Wiltshire home falls it would be difficult to say.

The difficulty of reconciling prediction with the idea of free-will is well recognised by the leading writers on the subject. It is expressed by Mr. H. F. Saltmarsh in his book *Foreknowledge* (Bell, 1938), in which he points out that "the philosophical implications of non-inferential precognition are very far-reaching and even revolutionary in character," and proceeds to refer to its particular bearing on the rival theories of Determinism and free-will.

Referring to the view that "our apparent free-will is nothing but a subjective illusion," he reminds us that this theory is "one which has been freely held by some of the greatest thinkers of ancient and modern times, and that it is still held by a large section of the human race.

He goes on to say: "I do not say that fatalism or determinism are the only possible theories which can be held consistently with the reality of precognition; in fact, as I shall hope to show later on, there is a third alternative which permits, though it does not necessarily entail, the existence of free-will."

This alternative theory he outlines in his final chapter, and arrives at the conclusion that "There is a *future* which is now determined by the present and the past, but that it is not inexorably fixed and unalterable—it is to some extent, at least, plastic, and can be modified by actions which we, as beings possessed of some degree of freedom of choice, initiate in the present."

The immensity and difficulty of the problems involved in the fact of precognition are also stressed and discussed by Dame Edith Lyttelton in her book *Some Cases of Prediction* (Bell, 1937). In her concluding chapter she remarks: "Certain questions obtrude themselves: Is everything that happens predestined, and are human creatures mere puppets dancing on strings in an already planned performance? Or are we creatures restricted to certain boundaries, yet within those allowed to exercise a measure of freedom and choice? Or again, do we create and shape our own futures, however unconsciously?"

Whatever the full truth of the matter may be, there is little doubt that our freedom of will is much more limited than is generally realised, and that heredity, environment, and moulding influences in general are more powerful factors than many of us are, at times, prepared to recognise. Nothing happens by chance, the law of cause and effect is unerring and unceasing in its operation. The kind of intelligence or mind, however, which can foresee with mathematical accuracy the outcome of the innumerable exercises of judgment or pure fancy of thousands of separate individuals which combine to determine the betting odds at the start of a particular horse-race presents a riddle so perplexing as to be utterly beyond human understanding.

ANTIGONE'S FAREWELL

Mr. O. L. Holland, of Bournemouth, sends us the following :

PATHETIC truly as was the prose version (LIGHT, January 9th) by the Rev. W. S. Pakenham-Walsh of "Antigone's" final speech in the tragedian's moving play, the passage, of course, is bound to lose something when turned from poetry into prose. Some of your readers may like to have it literally translated from the original and with the iambic metre preserved, as I have done in my rendering of the play published some nine years ago. It runs as follows :

O grave-mound, O bride-chamber, O thou deeply delv'd mansion,—eternal dungeon,—where I faring go unto mine own ones, whose contingent, 'mid the shades, amplest receiv'd hath Persephonè, of wasted wights; of whom the last I, and the sorriest, sure, by far, go down or ere my portion hath run out of life—being gone, however, high on hope withal I feed dear to arrive to father, passing dear to you, mother, and dear to you, own brother o' mine's twin heart :

because you dead ones, with own hand,—even you, did I bathe, and array you also, and did o'er your graves drink-offering give out : yet now, Polyneikès, when your body I strew for burial, thus rewarded am :

(*looking up to heavens protestingly*)
how having over-vaulted what divine decree? . . .
Why should I, maid ill-fated, t'wards the gods again look up? Which hail for friend in need?—when, lo you now,

for undevoutness, being devout, a name I win.
No, if belike this passeth with the gods for well, through suffering shall we own that we have sinful been : if *these* be sinful rather, may no graver ill they suffer, than they practise, wide of right on me !

Light

All communications for the EDITOR should be addressed: "The Editor of Light, 16 Queensberry Place, South Kensington, London, S.W.7." 'Phone: Kensington 3292-3.

EDITOR - - - GEORGE H. LETHEM

AS WE SEE IT

"FAITHFUL DEPARTED"—AND THE OTHERS

PRAYERS for the *repose* of the "Faithful Departed" are a regular feature of Roman Catholic services, and occasionally they are heard in Anglican and other Churches. Recently, in a broadcast from a Cathedral in Scotland, a Bishop of the Scottish Episcopal Church (which is not hampered by State control or tied by law to the unvaried use of ancient formulas) used a form of words which came nearer to what Spiritualists know to be desirable, when he prayed for the *welfare and progress* of those who had given their lives in defence of the country's righteous cause; *but* his petition was only on behalf of the "faithful departed"—words which indicate, and are meant to indicate those only who have accepted the doctrines and used the sacraments of the Churches for which the Bishop speaks.

But why should the Bishop's prayer be so restricted? As the Very Rev. Dr. Norman Maclean, a former Moderator of the Scottish National Presbyterian Church, was reminded (see the preface of his book, *Death Cannot Sever*) by a Hebridean shepherd, after he had preached on "Prayers for the Blessed Dead," it is not the blessed dead who most need our prayers, it is "the others."

Surely, the Bishop cannot with reverence suppose that God's love is limited to the "faithful" of the Episcopal or any other Church,

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of men's mind:
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

It is good that the Bishop should pray for the *progress* of the departed, thus recognising that the Life after Death is not confined to *repose*, but that it is real and full of possibilities and purpose. Yet, in praying only for "the faithful," he brings himself within the scope of the censure implied in the words of F. W. Faber's hymn, from which we have quoted:

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

Those who, like Dr. Maclean's shepherd-friend, have lost a dearly loved boy for whom it could not be claimed that he was amongst "the faithful," but who yet was faithful unto death, will be comforted by the knowledge which Spiritualism gives—that he is *not* outside God's fold, but that, on the contrary, he is in God's good care, and also that he is still within reach of the prayers of those who love him.

St. Peter was convinced by his psychic trance-experience (Acts x.) that "God is no respecter of persons." He might have added that "God is no respecter of ecclesiastical labels," no matter how ancient or hallowed by human usage they may be.

THEY CAN STILL GUIDE

IT has been generally regarded as tragic that, in the midst of a desperate struggle for Right against Wrong, outstanding champions on the side of Right should be stricken down suddenly by Death—as happened recently to General Metaxas, the Greek Premier, and Lord Lloyd, the British Colonial Secretary. In Greece, General Metaxas was regarded as the indispensable organiser of Victory; in this country, Lord Lloyd held an important position and had been

acclaimed as a man well fitted by nature and training to take a great part in the drive for national security.

Must it be assumed that the guidance and inspiration these men had been giving, and which was valued so highly, is completely lost? They have gone from the sight of their sorrowing friends—they "seemed to die;" but, as Spiritualists know and others profess to believe, they (the men as distinct from their physical bodies) still live in their spiritual bodies, with consciousness, memory, will, patriotism—all that constituted their distinctive personalities; and the evidence accumulated by Spiritualists suggests that they are not likely to have removed far from the scenes of their earthly labours.

That being so, can it be supposed that they have lost all interest in the great work in which they were engaged? Such a supposition, though widely held, is not reasonable, and is completely contrary to the experiences described by communicators from the Other Side of the Veil through which they have disappeared from normal sight.

We believe that, from the Other Side of the Veil they will wish to use their influence—telepathically, if no other way is opened for them—to guide and inspire those who have taken their places. Lincoln, the Liberator, was so guided and inspired by one of his predecessors in the American Presidency; and only recently it has been asserted that Gladstone, the Grand Old Man of the Victorian era, has been endeavouring to speak once more to his struggling fellow-countrymen.

Knowledge of the means provided by Nature (or by God, if that term be preferred) for the communication of such guidance and inspiration would make the process easier and more likely to be immediately effective; but, even without knowledge on the part of the recipients, telepathic inspiration is possible; and we may hope that, in so far as it is needed, it will be received and acted upon.

These leaders need not be regarded as "lost," but rather as having joined the great unseen company of leaders on the Other Side, of whose doings and sayings we get hints and glimpses from time to time.

VALEDICTORY

In Memory of A.E.H., February 28th.

No ancient name he bore; no worldly wealth
As this world counts great wealth, was ever his;
Of mind to body tuned; the perfect health
Of mind to body tuned. Full rich in this,
And in the love of neighbours who had found
Beneath a brother's roof the counsels sound,
The hospitable cheer of one whose soul
Was steeped in service—he pursued his way,
Dauntless, steel-true, toward that shining goal
That nearer drew with every new-born day.
The service of his fellows was his creed—
The noble creed that made an old heart young,
And tenderly divined all human need
That sought his healing touch. . . . Yet that kind tongue
Could lash with scorpion-stings the souls of those
Who shamed their manhood. All who were the foci
Of Brotherhood, and Liberty, and Light,
Learned soon to fear that tongue!—the flashing eye
That pierced all selfish wrongs; for in his sight
Man was not man who harboured tyranny.
O noble life of service, ended now
For England, in the autumn of thy days. . . .
Great life of trust fulfilled, unbroken vow
And fearless pilgrimage down thorny ways—
Live on in those who drank of thy rich wine!
Uplift, sustain, stoop earthwards to divine
Through years to come, as in the poignant past,
How those who mourn, in lesser circles move
Since that dread day of severance! . . . Till at last
They shall grow worthy of that "Greater Love. . ."

H.S.

THE WORKS OF DOUGLAS FAWCETT

By DR. A. G. THOMPSON

IN these grievous and chaotic times the man who thinks for himself at all is more than ever in need of some sure refuge on which to pin his faith and hopes and shape his life.

Born and reared in such varied circumstances and environments and with so many other factors at work in moulding their dispositions and characters, it is not surprising that men should differ so widely in their outlook on life and that what may suffice for one may be quite inadequate to supply the needs of another.

Thus, for the devout Christian, what need for anything but the faith and beliefs of his particular fold? For the True Believer, is not all truth and wisdom enshrined within the covers of the Koran? And even to some Spiritualists, the mere assurance of proved survival may seem enough.

But there are those for whom such things do not suffice and who, almost overwhelmed in contemplating the evil and misery rampant throughout the world and the iron cruelty and atrocious suffering that pervade Nature, long to find some firm foundation for a belief in an ultimately friendly universe; one that is, so to speak, "safe for souls." Such men are seeking for a fresh interpretation of the world-system that harmonises with modern knowledge, and this neither the accepted creeds nor academic philosophy seem able to supply. To these, the works of Douglas Fawcett should make a wide appeal, offering, as they do, a surprisingly new and original outlook on the cosmos based on a metaphysical argument that is essentially sane and straightforward and, in the main, easily comprehensible to the ordinary intelligent reader not specially trained in philosophy.

It is one of the most disquieting signs of the times that no modern religion or philosophy conformable to our widened knowledge of the material universe has yet made its mark upon mankind. There has been, up to now, no "New Revelation"; and it may seem idle to suppose that a few books on philosophy (a subject utterly disregarded by most men), could alter the situation.

The spirit of reaction is not confined to Dictator countries, and a great deal of modern thought is either reactionary, in the direction of seeking new adaptations and fresh interpretations of outworn creeds, or is frankly pessimistic in character and outlook. Even if crude materialism is no longer fashionable, the Larger Hope and wider vision seem to possess but little hold on the majority of mankind.

But to the writer, these works of Douglas Fawcett have indeed proved a new revelation; and my purpose in this little article is to try to persuade those readers of LIGHT who have not already made this author's acquaintance to do so as speedily as possible, hoping that they, too, may find confirmation of their belief in the progress of the soul from the philosophical point of view and renewed trust in a cosmos that is based on the inexhaustible riches of *Divine Imagination*.

Mr. Fawcett's two most recent publications—the *Zermatt* and *Oberland Dialogues*—are, as their titles suggest, written as dialogues between groups of friends, their main topic being the nature of reality. All the familiar philosophical puzzles are discussed and viewed with the new light of Imaginism thrown upon them. Even the old "Riddle of Evil" has to yield before what appears to be a really satisfactory solution. The problem of Time, that has of late years been the subject of so much incomprehensible and muddled thought by various writers, receives a much more simple treatment and elucidation in the light of Imaginism than would have been deemed possible. The *Zermatt Dialogues* deal mainly with the metaphysical basis of the author's philosophy, and the *Oberland* are more especially concerned with the nature of the soul of man and allied problems.

It would appear that *Homo Sapiens*, far from being Lord of Creation, occupies but a lowly place among the various levels of being that are included in his particular world-system, though fortunately endowed with good prospects of rising higher.

We learn how to reconcile our own innate sense of the freedom of the will with a cosmos that turns out to be not quite so determinate in character as Science would have it; and Modern Science itself, shorn of its glamour, is put in its rightful place, with all its limitations and abstractions most delightfully revealed in their true light.

"THE TRUE MYSTIC"

Some of us may be inclined to think that, in treating of the nature of the Soul of Man, Mr. Fawcett has underestimated the value of Spiritualism and Psychical Research for, though accepting their main phenomena as proved beyond doubt, he maintains, like so many others, that nothing of value has "come through" from these sources; though he is quite willing to admit the inspiration of that *rara avis*, the True Mystic.

In this connection, it may be of interest to point out that my own introduction to the works of this author was an appreciative review in the columns of LIGHT by Miss Geraldine Cummins, through whose mediumship many of us believe communications of real value have been obtained: but perhaps Mr. Fawcett would put that gifted lady under the heading of a True Mystic.

After reading these Dialogues—which are obviously designed to reach a larger public than his previous philosophical works and are beautifully illustrated with photographs of the mountains amid which they are supposed to take place—one realises how many hours have been spent in studying the tomes of other philosophers, both ancient and modern; and we contrast them with this author, whose fecundity of new ideas and amazing insight into the heart of things seems well-nigh inexhaustible.

He demonstrates to us how dull and trite and useless are such concepts as that of the Absolute, first conceived in Oriental thought and discussed *ad nauseam* by academic philosophers up to the present time.

Reason is cast down from the proud seat on which she was enthroned by Hegel as the guiding principle of the cosmos and shown to be a mere working tool peculiar to humanity.

But it is even more in the constructive part of his thought that this writer excels; and we are shown how, from Divine Imagination, are born the world-systems containing the "centres of consiring" that are to act for themselves as free agents, limited only by the source from which they spring. And even though (as the author maintains with all due humility) these ideas are but a mere adumbration of the truth about reality, nevertheless his vision in all its breadth and depth is a splendid one and admirably fitted to be the outlook for our modern world which, if progress is to be made after the present forces of evil have been overcome, obviously needs some such "Vision Splendid" to urge it forward on the long path towards that "Divine Event" so frequently referred to in these books.

VEXATAE QAESTIONES

In this elusive and eternal "Now"
For ever slipping by and passing on,
No power can hold—no sooner come than gone—
We try to solve a mystery unknown.

We probe the phantom at the vessel's prow
Entangled, many-wired, beswitched—and veiled,
Some may have glimps'd the form, and others failed—
And more benignant if left unassailed.

But in this complex Fabric that we know
With Time a shuttle, flying swift and fast,
A certainty o'er every lot is cast
The woven web is *permanent* at last.

M.C.M.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Through the Trance-Mediumship of Mrs. Pamela Nash
At meetings recently held at the L.S.A. (see announcement on page 66), the following questions were answered through the trance-mediumship of Mrs. Pamela Nash:—

(1) *What constitutes being well born into the spirit world?*

In other words that means passing into a good sphere, I suppose. Yes, that is being well born and is achieved by the innermost strivings of the soul to live steadfastly day by day, aspiring towards the higher spiritual levels. You will remember that I have told you the life in the earthplane is the elementary stage and unless you give happiness you can never receive it, but by striving to make those around you happy you create happiness for yourself, and so as your Bible says: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord, thou good and faithful servant."

(2) *We are sometimes told that there are centres for study in your life, schools and colleges, to use familiar names. What are the principal subjects taught in your schools?*

What you call colleges we call schools of learning; you go through your college-classes learning whatever is being taught. With us it is just following our desires according to our attainment in spiritual knowledge, and our desires vary according to the special work we desire to do. It is very much the same as it is with you, all minds move in different channels of thought. Some would like to be teachers in order to help others, artists because they love beauty and wish to give beautiful pictures, another music, and so on. So in the spirit-world we have these training schools to help us develop, train and equip ourselves according to the desire of the soul. You will understand that it is always the desire of the soul which determines the heights to which we may attain. We are trained by higher minds just as you are; the great desire in the world of spirit is to serve, and true service brings love and happiness.

(3) *Is Hell a state or a place?*

Of course it is a state and not a place. Did not the Christ say, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within?" So, if heaven is a state that is within oneself then the condition which is the opposite of heaven must be a state and within. Believe me, it is a state of anguish to the soul, as much as a state of happiness which you call the sublimity of heaven.

(4) *Why is it that the witnessing of the phenomena of Spiritualism does not (in so many cases) make its believers better, truer men and women?*

Because the actual phenomena is not always of an elevating nature, and sometimes the conditions among the witnesses of the phenomena are not good, therefore it may be neither good nor elevating and may even cause distress to those present. Good phenomena always elevates and helps, but this is not the case when the phenomena has not been uplifting to the soul.

(5) *In Healing Prayer Circles is it necessary for the patient to "link in" himself or to be linked in by deputy—or can the link be dispensed with?*

The link is always good because of the law of sympathy. The law of sympathy binds together, and through that link there can be greater power for the channels. It is not a necessity, but it is a great help. Likewise, a deputy can be of the same value as the sick person because sympathy is such a tremendous power and force. I think the link is always good, but it is not essential to the power of healing which goes out into the ether; a living power goes out with the prayer of healing, and it is received by the patient for whom it is intended.

(Previous instalments of these answers to questions appeared in LIGHT of January 30th and February 13th. Look out for further instalments).

OUR BODIES ONLY INSTRUMENTS

Sir Oliver Lodge's Conclusions on the Relation of Life and Matter

WHERE did life come from? Where was that life before there was any matter fit for it to inhabit?

The psychical and the physical always seem to be related to each other. There is an interaction between the psychical and the physical; whether it is necessary always, I don't know, and we are not likely to know. But by the physical we mean something more than merely matter. Matter is physical, but the Ether is physical too. Many physical things are material. Magnetism, light, and electricity all belong to the Ether.

I have gradually come to the view, which was thrown out as a speculation in the middle of last century by Professors Tait and Balfour Stewart in their rather famous book, *The Unseen Universe*, that the main realities of the universe are not in matter at all, but in the ether of space. If there is any sense in location at all, applied to non-material things, therein is the whole of the spiritual world, and only here and there has it had any interaction with matter.

I go further and hold that, in so far as we act on matter at all, we really act on it in a secondary way, our relation with matter is secondary. We act on matter indirectly through the ether. The ether is responsible not only for gravitation, but for electricity and magnetism and light, for elasticity also, and all strain; it is also responsible for cohesion, for linking together all the particles which would otherwise be disconnected. It is through the ether that we ourselves act on matter, and I suggest that it is there, in that connecting and all-permeating medium, that we must look for the permanent basis of life.

QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

Here and there, however, it has been found possible for individual life to associate itself with certain molecules of matter; that is what has happened here, and that is what we have grown so accustomed to that we cannot think of it existing in any other way. And we ask—shall we survive? Survive what?—our temporary and indirect and secondary connection with matter?

You see that this question of survival, regarded from my present point of view, is what we used to call a *husteron proteron*—"the cart before the horse." The marvel is that we are associated with matter at all. That is the peculiar thing. I used to say that Death was an adventure to which we might look forward. So it is; but I believe that, really and truly, it is earth-life that is the adventure. It is this earth-life that has been the strange and exceptional thing. The wonder is that we ever succeeded in entering a matter body.

Our association with matter is foreign and difficult and puzzling. It is evidently a very important episode. We are regarded, it seems to me, by the Higher Powers as in a difficult position, worthy of help, and needing it! Our association with matter is temporary; that we can go on without matter must seem to them comparatively obvious. Life is, as it were, something that condenses upon this planet and then evaporates whence it came.

The attempt to explain life in terms of matter has failed. Mechanism has its uses and the material body is a temporary instrument. It is a familiar experience that matter has to be coerced to do what we want. A great many of our difficulties are due to the refractory nature of matter. Our material bodies are troublesome—troublesome to put on, troublesome to shake off, troublesome to deal with in many ways. They are not really ourselves, they are an instrument to be used for a time—a short time.

(From an address by Sir Oliver Lodge to a gathering of Clergy, afterwards included in his book, *Phantom Walls*, published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1929).

WHAT OUR READERS ARE SAYING

THE STORY OF A CHILD'S GRIEF

SIR,—The story of a child's grief, related by Ethel Mary Waller in *LIGHT* of January 30th, evoked in me a feeling of disgruntlement with the Spirit-world. Such mental suffering, endured so long, by an innocent child is hardly in consonance with what we are told about the care of children by kindly-disposed men and women who attend to the mental development of young souls who pass to the Beyond lacking the education and training of adult life on earth.

Why this little mite, seen in dire distress by Mrs. Davis over a comparatively trifling bit of jewelry, whose value to its child-mind was insignificant, should suffer retribution after full and willing forgiveness by its parents, requires some explanation. Otherwise I, for one, must either discredit the story entirely or lose my faith in a God of Love.

"She wants to recover the ring, which she believes must be found before she can obtain her parents' forgiveness," is an explanation requiring considerable qualification.

If I thought the little chap who left my home many years ago for the Many Mansions beyond was still mentally disturbed over the rebukes for naughtiness which I administered to him, I should cut God out of my prayers entirely and address my appeals for mercy to the Devil.

(Major) J. WEBSTER.

STRANGE BUT DISTURBING

Sir,—I read with great interest, but with mingled feelings, the story on the first page of *LIGHT* of January 30th of the after-death appearance of a little girl and her intense grief for a fault committed by her at the age of five years. We are told the child had been dead "for years," and so she must have grown up in the spirit-world, and it seems impossible that she would not have been told, by those who had her in their care, of her parents' love and forgiveness for what she did. It is a strange story and I do not understand it, and it is disturbing to think that a child should suffer so deeply for years.

I would be glad if some one would explain it to me, and I am sure there must be other of your readers who find it perplexing and rather distressing.

(Mrs.) BERTHA F. MACINTOSH.

(NOTE.—Other letters, similar in strain, have been received on this subject. We think the incident described by Mrs. Waller can probably be explained as an example of "haunting," in which it need not be supposed the child was actually present. See Mr. Bedford's letter on this page.—*Editor*).

PREVISION AND FREE-WILL

Sir,—Certainly, to the average person, the issue seems clear—either Man has free-will, involving moral responsibility, or he has not. It would seem that if, by the term "free-will" be meant an essentially arbitrary discretion, then a man's choice and its consequences must be unpredictable; whereas if the discretion be not arbitrary, but subject to various influences, then the will, to that extent, cannot properly be said to be free.

In the latter case, if the so-called exercise of will-power be the expression of residual impulse after the mutual cancellation of any other opposing impulses, then all that can be said is that a human being acts in such and such a way because it is natural for him to do so.

In these circumstances, supposing all the factors could be known, it should be possible to predict the decision in any given instance, so that the whole pattern of the future would, logically, be stereotyped.

Meanwhile, can it be truly said that future events have been foretold accurately? It so happens that the writer has first-hand knowledge of a case in point.

During the last war, a lady of my acquaintance consulted a clairvoyante regarding her brother, who

was expected shortly to join his regiment in France. This interview took place in the month of July. The clairvoyante said that the consultant's brother would be wounded in two places in the middle of October, the most serious wound would be in the right arm and at one time there would be a danger that it would have to be amputated; this, however, would turn out not to be necessary, but the young officer would have to remain in hospital until after the New Year.

This forecast proved to be accurate in all respects, the actual date which the wound was received being October 15th.

CHARLES THORNTON.

THE WATCHER

Sir,—Quite recently, a friend, E.H., has told me how her son's life was saved when suffering from a dangerous illness. E.H. had nursed him for months. One day, in her sitting room, in broad daylight, she became aware of a tall Indian in native dress. He held up his hand and said quite clearly: "Do not take the boy to Madeira" (a place under consideration). This strange visitor appeared several times, and my friend was afraid she was suffering from hallucinations. She consulted her doctor, an old friend. He told her not to be anxious or alarmed, but to follow the advice given to her. Under her devoted care, her son made a good recovery in England and E.H. never ceased to thank her unknown visitant.

I come to the most remarkable part of her story. Her family had an Indian ancestor—one of her great-grandfathers married the daughter of an Indian Chief and brought her to England. E.H. is a natural healer and I am sure a member of her family came to give her confidence in herself and her power to carry on her fight on her son's behalf.

E. S. NORFOLK.

THE BORLEY HAUNTINGS

Sir,—I was very interested to read the explanation given by Rev. R. W. Maitland of the Borley hauntings in your issue of January 23rd.

How refreshing to read an hypothesis ruling out the theory of discarnate spirits. Although a Spiritualist, I have yet to find any evidence to prove that evil or earthbound spirits exist. During my association with a spirit (through the mediumship of my wife) who uses the name of "The Messenger," I have not once prayed for protection, or had any reason to believe it was necessary. I have proved that he is a spirit—one of the few I have been able to prove during my fourteen years in this movement.

He warned me at the beginning that much I had accepted as truth—such as earthbound and evil spirits and obsession, and I am quite sure he is right . . .

Now for the Borley hauntings. I heartily agree with Mr. Maitland that we create our own ghosts if there are the requisite conditions. How little we know of the power of the mind. It can move objects, create forms and make markings. I am not a Medium, but have seen "thought forms" myself that would have been visible to anyone. If a Sensitive entered a room where a tragedy had occurred (and they believed in earthbound spirits) they would immediately sense the happening and would say "Here is a soul in distress, I must pray for them," but in reality they are but picking up the thought-impressions etherically impressed upon the very walls that witnessed it. . .

The reason Spiritualism does not progress to the extent it should is, because of these false beliefs, people become frightened of it. I continually meet people who tell me this.

STANLEY BEDFORD.

MR. FRANK T. BLAKE

Mr. Frank T. Blake, President of the Spiritualists' National Union, has undergone an operation for peritonitis in a hospital at Boscombe, Bournemouth. His condition was reported last week to be "fairly satisfactory."

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