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# PSYCHIC STUDIES

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# THE NEW PSYCHIC STUDIES

IN THEIR

RELATION TO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

BY

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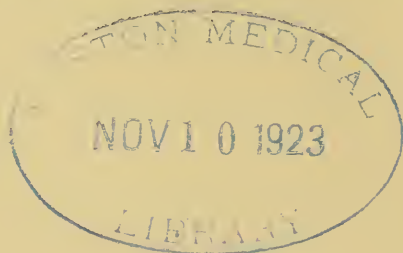
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# THE NEW PSYCHIC STUDIES

IN THEIR RELATION TO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

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## I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

It is now nearly forty years since Hugh Miller sent forth to the Christian world the following words :

“ The clergy, as a class, suffer themselves to linger far in the rear of an intelligent and accomplished laity, a full age behind the requirements of the time. Let them not shut their eyes to the danger which is obviously coming. The battle of the Evidences will have as certainly to be fought on the field of physical science as it was contested in the last age on that of the metaphysics. And on this new arena the combatants will have to employ new weapons, which it will be the privilege of the challenger to choose. The old, opposed to these,

would prove but of little avail. In an age of muskets and artillery the bows and arrows of an obsolete school of warfare would be found greatly less than sufficient, in the field of battle, for purposes either of assault or defence."

The prophecy was true ; the defenders of our religion were celebrating their victory over the sceptical students of mind ; but their joy was premature ; they had yet to meet the sceptical students of matter. This second battle has been fought and won, and its dying echoes still sound in our ears. The seer who foretold it sought to arouse the leaders of the Christian hosts and prepare them for the coming conflict ; yet it may be said that they were taken by surprise, and that, had they heeded his warning in time, surveyed the field carefully, and made a wise disposition of their forces, they might have avoided many mistakes and much labor and loss.

This glance at the past may teach us a lesson for the future. It is probable that the enemy is about to change his method of attack, and that, if we wish not to be taken again at a disadvantage, we must study his recent movements, ascertain what they portend, stand ready to turn to the new quarter

from which he threatens to advance, meet him with arms equal to his own, and maintain our ground not only with courage, but also with vigilance and intelligence. In the past fifteen years the materialistic interpretation of nature has made no progress ; on the contrary, it has encountered numerous unexpected difficulties, and materialists have assumed a less boastful tone. Materialism is no longer a novelty to the world at large, and cultivated people in general have ceased to think much of it, though it is still a vast force within the limited circles of those who make a specialty of the physical sciences. It is no longer capable of serving the purpose of the great enemy of God and man, and we may expect, therefore, that, while he will not cast it aside, he will assign to it a subordinate use, and invent some other weapon of offence.

Possibly this may be found in the psychic studies now engaging the attention of many distinguished men. These studies are termed psychic in a modified sense ; they pertain not to the ordinary operations of the mind, but to the unusual, such as thought-transference, somnambulism, mesmerism, clairvoyance, spiritualism, apparitions of the living, haunted houses, ghosts, and the Buddhistic occult-

ism. Many of the phenomena to be investigated seem to lie in the dim borderland between the spirit and the body, or, if there be no such neutral zone, in the territory where they overlap and mingle, a region hitherto occupied only by the savage hordes of superstition, imposture, and quackery.

The studies have been carried on chiefly under the direction of the British Society for Psychical Research. This society was constituted in 1882, under the presidency of Professor Henry Sidgwick, of Trinity College, Cambridge. He has recently retired from the chair, and Professor Balfour Stewart has been chosen his successor. At the end of 1882 the society had 150 members ; at the end of 1883, 288 ; at the end of 1884, 520 ; and in April, 1885, 586. It is thus apparent that both interest and confidence in its work are increasing. The President, Professor Balfour Stewart, says in his inaugural address, published a year ago : “ Men of the highest standing in all departments of knowledge have consented to join our ranks.” Among the many distinguished members who are actively engaged in the labors of the society the following may be mentioned : the Bishop of Carlisle ; the Bishop of Ripon ; the Dean of Lincoln ; Lord

Rayleigh, who has just retired from the chair of Elementary Physics in Cambridge University ; Henry Sidgwick, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Cambridge University, and author of works on political economy and the methods of ethics ; Mrs. Sidgwick, wife of Professor Sidgwick, and sister of the late Francis M. Balfour, the celebrated embryologist, a lady of remarkable intelligence ; Balfour Stewart, Professor of Physics in Owens College, Manchester ; W. F. Barrett, Professor of Physics in the Royal College of Science, Dublin ; Edmund Gurney, whose book on " The Power of Sound " has given him a high rank among physicists ; Hensley Wedgwood, the author of the " Etymological Dictionary ;" Arthur Balfour, M.P., the author of " A Defence of Philosophic Doubt ;" St. George Lane Fox, an authority in mythology ; Richard A. Hutton, the editor of the Spectator ; Malcomb Gurney Guthrie, the critic of the philosophy of Herbert Spencer ; W. F. Myers, the writer of essays and poems ; Dr. George Wyld, President of the British Theosophical Society, and Earl Russell, the grandson of the statesman. The list of active members shows many other noted names. The honorary members, who, though not

actively engaged in the work of the society, consent to support it with their influence, are J. C. Adams, LL.D., F.R.S., Professor of Astronomy in Cambridge University, and the discoverer, with Leverrier, of the planet Neptune ; William Crookes, F.R.S., the physicist ; Alfred Russel Wallace, the naturalist ; the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, the statesman ; Lord Tennyson, the poet ; John Ruskin, the art-critic, and G. F. Watts, R.A., the painter.

These names are given here to show the reader that the researches of the Psychical Society are pursued in earnest, and by men of sober judgment, above the suspicion of credulity or haste.

A similar society has been formed in this country ; it is composed of promising materials ; but it is too young as yet to report any very important results of its labors.

These things render it probable that the new psychic studies have come to stay for at least a generation, and that they will challenge the attention of the most highly cultivated minds. If such shall be the case, sceptics will not fail to use them for the promotion of unbelief. It is evident that Christian thinkers should not ignore them, but, on



the contrary, should engage in them heartily, and in a judicial temper, eager only for the truth, and confident that when found it will aid rather than hinder the advancement of their holy religion.

The British society has collected a great mass of facts ; it has already deduced from these a number of important theories and a few still more important conclusions ; and it is not too early to consider what advantages the Church may fairly gain from its labors, what use the sceptic will seek to make of them, and how best to answer the arguments which he will find in them.

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## II.

### MATERIALISM.

WE may account it a gain that the attention of men of science is no longer directed exclusively to matter, but is turned to the mind. We see what we look at, and suffer it to shut other things from our perception. To one who makes the sun-spots his special study the light of the sun is important chiefly as a means of exhibiting the darkness by contrast. To one who makes the ant his special

study this tiny creature appears a formidable rival of man. So to one who makes matter his special study the very mind with which he studies becomes an object of secondary importance, and he may seek to interpret it as a mere phase of matter. Those who believe in God and in the immortality of the soul should be pleased with the evidence that men of science are less exclusively devoted to the study of matter, and are allowing the mind a share of their researches, even though in its more unusual manifestations ; for they should find in this fact another evidence of the decay of materialism, and a prophecy of its speedy disappearance from the cultivated circles of society, assured that mind will vindicate itself when it can secure fair and impartial attention.

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### III.

#### SUPERSTITION AND IMPOSTURE.

THE Christian may hope also that the scientific study of such subjects as mesmerism, spiritualism, and clairvoyance will dissipate much superstition and prevent much imposture. Quacks and charla-



tans of every sort take advantage of mystery to impose upon their dupes : in the infancy of astronomy the astrologer flourishes with his pretence of reading the future ; and in the infancy of chemistry the alchemist flourishes with his pretence of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. So to-day, in the infancy of our psychic studies, we have a host of mediums, clairvoyants, mesmerizers, and fortune-tellers, who claim to wield extraordinary, if not supernatural powers, who batten upon ignorance and credulity, and who wield an influence but little favorable to the religious and moral improvement of those who consult them and follow their counsels. They live in a region of twilight, concerning which the most intelligent know little more than the most unlettered. Should the new psychic studies prove that there is no clairvoyance, no mesmerism, no basis of fact for spiritualism to rest upon except tricks of legerdemain, millions of souls, now in abject bondage to superstition and irreligion, would be released. But perhaps we are not to look for this disproof ; the work already accomplished renders it almost or quite certain that it will not be given us.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

But we are promised a solution of many riddles, the reduction of a thousand marvels to the ordinary plane of natural law, and this will be a good service, which will deliver multitudes from delusion and sin. The advantage will not be less than that which was gained when astrology became astronomy and alchemy chemistry. Indeed, it may be greater ; for the superstitions of our time are more directly hostile to Christianity than were those of astrology and alchemy, which were cultivated in the bosom of the Church, and not seldom by the pure and the devout.

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#### IV.

##### CLAIRVOYANCE ; PROPHECY.

THE subject which the British Society has investigated most thoroughly is the alleged transference of thought from one mind to another without the agency of external signs. The most common terms to designate the process are mind-reading, thought-transference, and telepathy. The experiments have been numerous, and have been conducted with

many precautions to avoid error. They lead to two conclusions : first, that the great majority of mankind have no power to interpret clearly the minds of others except by the ordinary agencies of communication ; and second, that a small percentage of the human race, under favorable circumstances and to a limited extent, can read the minds of others without the ordinary agencies. Some of these few possess the gift in a low and others in a higher degree. The method of investigation usually employed is the following : the experimenter fixes his mind intently upon some object or geometrical figure, and the subject of the experiments, who is called the percipient, guesses what it is, or attempts to make a drawing of it. From a long series of experiments, tested by the calculus of probabilities, it is easy to determine whether the subject is a mind-reader or not. A brief extract from the third report of the committee on thought-transference will illustrate the method pursued and the care with which the investigation is conducted :

“ The percipient, Mr. Smith, is seated blindfolded at a table in our own room ; a paper and pencil are within his reach ; and a member of the committee is at his side. Another member of the committee

leaves the room, and outside the closed door draws some figure at random. Mr. Blackburn, who, so far, has remained in the room with Mr. Smith, is now called out, and the door closed ; the drawing is then held before him for a few seconds, till its impression is stamped upon his mind. Then, closing his eyes, Mr. Blackburn is led back into the room, and placed, standing or sitting, behind Mr. Smith, at a distance of some two feet from him. A brief period of intense mental concentration on Mr. Blackburn's part now follows. Presently Mr. Smith takes up the pencil, amid the unbroken and absolute silence of all present, and attempts to reproduce on paper the impression he has gained. He is allowed to do as he pleases as regards the bandage round his eyes ; sometimes he pulls it down before he begins to draw ; but if the figures be not distinctly present to his mind, he prefers to let it remain on, and draws fragments of the figures as they are seen. During all this time Mr. Blackburn's eyes are, generally, firmly closed ; sometimes he requests us to bandage his eyes tightly as an aid to concentration ; and except when it is distinctly recorded, he has not touched Mr. Smith, and has not gone in front of him, or in any way within his possible field of vision, since he

re-entered the room. When Mr. Smith has drawn what he can, the original drawing, which has so far remained outside the room, is brought in, and compared with the reproduction. Both are marked by the committee and put away in a secure place."

To illustrate the surprising degree of accuracy attained by some of the best percipients, several tables like the following are published in the report :

Things Chosen.	No. of Trials.	No. Right on		Total Right.	If First Guess only is Counted, the Result by Experiment was	The Chance of Success by Accident was
		1st Guess.	2d Guess.			
Cards.....	36	10	9	24	1 right guess in $3\frac{1}{2}$	1 right guess in 52.
Nos. 10-100..	20	5	3	9	1 " " 4	1 " " 90.
Objects.....	21	7	1	10	1 " " 3	1 " " 40.
Names... ..	8	4	3	7	1 " " 2	Something indefinitely small.
Totals... .	85	26	16	50		

The following specimens of figures thought of by experimenters, and of their reproductions by percipients, will serve still further to illustrate the subject, and to show on what cogent evidence the society bases its conclusion that beyond question some persons possess the power of mind-reading :



ORIGINAL.



REPRODUCTION.



ORIGINALS.



REPRODUCTION.

ORIGINAL DRAWING.



REPRODUCTION





ORIGINAL.



REPRODUCTION.

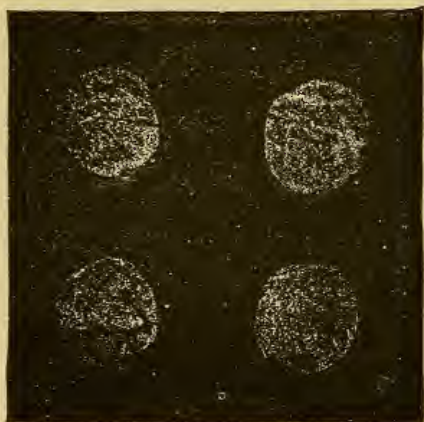


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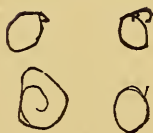


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ORIGINAL DRAWING



REPRODUCTION.

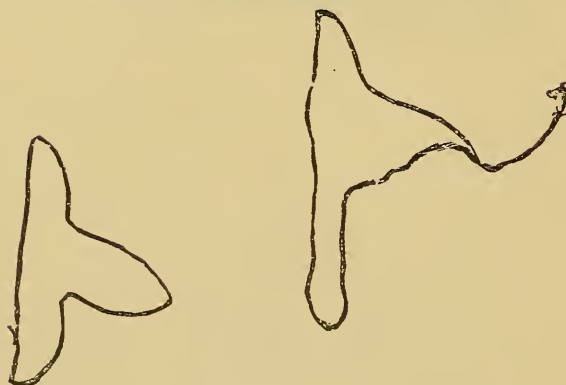




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REPRODUCTION.





ORIGINAL DRAWING.



REPRODUCTION.



## ORIGINAL DRAWING.



## REPRODUCTION



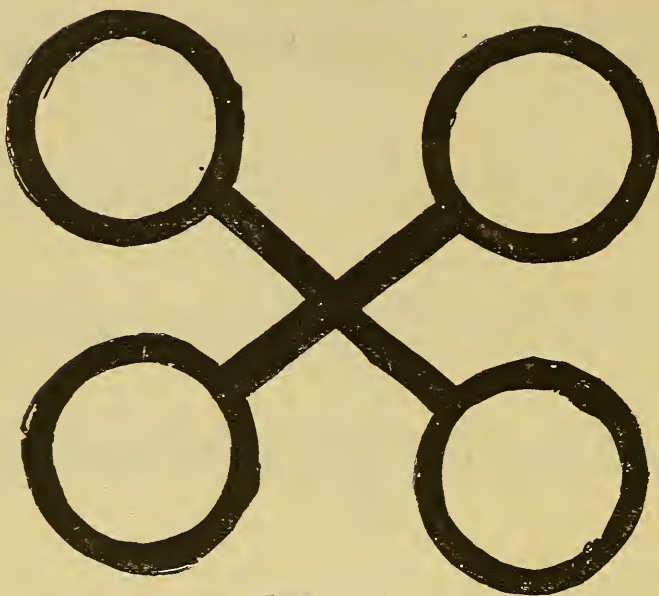
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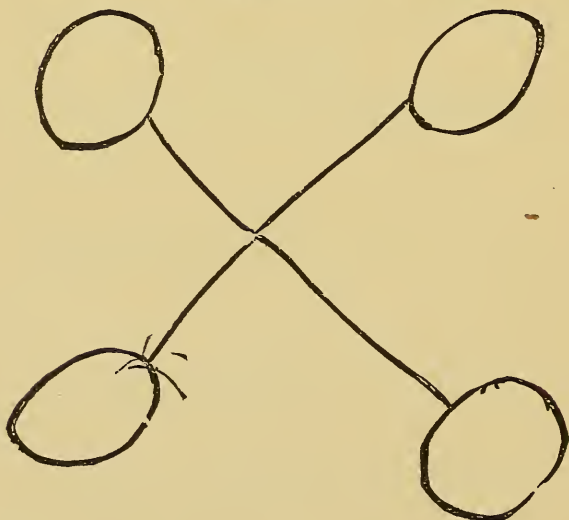
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ORIGINAL DRAWING.



REPRODUCTION.



ORIGINAL DRAWING.



REPRODUCTION.



There is some evidence that many persons who cannot be called mind-readers, and perhaps the majority of our race, may be affected in a vague manner by the thoughts and feelings of others, specially if these are distinct or vehement. The proof is presented in a report of experiments conducted by the well-known French investigator, M. Ch. Richet, published in the *Revue Philosophique* for December, 1884, and discussed by Mr. Edmund Gurney in the "Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research" of the same month and year. The experiments were numerous and varied, and but a single brief extract from the account of Mr. Gurney can be given here ; but this is sufficient to illustrate the method pursued and the results obtained :

" A card being drawn at random out of a pack, the ' agent ' fixed his attention on it, and the ' percipient ' endeavored to name it. The novelty of M. Richet's method was this : that though the success, as judged by the results of any particular series of trials, seemed slight, showing that he was not experimenting with what we should consider good subjects, he made the trials on a sufficiently extended scale to bring out the fact that the guesses

were on the whole, though not strikingly, above the number that pure accident would account for, and that their total was considerably above that number.

“ This observation involves a new and striking application of the calculus of probabilities. M. Richet takes advantage of the fact that, the larger the number of trials made under conditions where success is purely accidental, the more nearly will the total number of successes attained conform to the figure which the formula of probabilities gives. For instance, if some one draws a card at random out of a full pack, and before it has been looked at by any one present, I make a guess at its suit, my chance of being right is of course 1 in 4. Similarly, if the process is repeated 52 times, the probable number of successes, according to the strict calculus of probabilities, is 13 ; in 520 trials the probable number of successes is 130. Now, if we consider only a short series of 52 guesses, I may be accidentally right many more times than 13, or many less times. But if the series be prolonged—if 520 guesses be allowed, instead of 52—the actual number of successes will vary from the probable number within much smaller limits ; and if we suppose



an infinite prolongation, the proportional divergence between the actual and the probable number will become infinitely small. This being so, it is clear that if, in a very short series of trials, we find a considerable difference between the actual number of successes and the probable number, there is no reason for regarding this difference as anything but purely accidental; but if we find a similar difference in a very long series, we are justified in surmising that some condition beyond mere accident has been at work. If cards be drawn in succession from a pack, and I guess the suit rightly in 3 out of 4 trials, I shall be foolish to be surprised; but if I guess the suit rightly in 3000 out of 4000 trials, I shall be equally foolish not to be surprised.

“Now, M. Richet continued his trials until he had obtained a very large total; and the results were such at any rate as to suggest that accident had not ruled undisturbed, that a guiding condition had been introduced which affected in the right direction a certain small percentage of the guesses made. That condition, if it existed, could be nothing else than the fact that, prior to the guess being made, a person in the neighborhood of the guesser had concentrated his attention on the card drawn.



Hence the results, so far as they go, make for the reality of the faculty of 'mental suggestion.' The faculty, if present, was clearly very slightly developed, whence the necessity of experimenting on a very large scale before its genuine influence on the numbers could be even surmised.

"Out of 2927 trials at guessing the suit of a card, drawn at random, and steadily looked at by another person, the actual number of successes was 789 ; the probable number, had pure accident prevailed, was 732. The total was made up of 39 series of different lengths, in which 11 persons took part, M. Richet himself being in some cases the guesser, and in others the person who looked at the card. He observed that, when a large number of trials were made at one sitting, the aptitude of both persons concerned seemed to be affected ; it became harder for the agent to visualize, and the proportion of successes on the guesser's part decreased. If we agree to reject from the above total all the series in which over 100 trials were made consecutively, the numbers become more striking. Out of 1833 trials, we then get 510 successes, the probable number being only 458 ; that is to say, the actual number exceeds the probable number by about  $\frac{1}{10}$ .

Some further experiments, where the particular card, and not merely the suit, was to be guessed, gave a number of successes slightly, but only slightly, above the probable number. Out of 782 trials, the actual number of successes was 17, while the probable number was 15 ; and there was a similarly slight excess over the probable number when only the color of the card was to be guessed ; whence M. Richet surmises that there may be a field of choice too wide, and a field of choice too narrow, for the influence of 'mental suggestion' to have effective play."

The results obtained by M. Richet become more significant for us when we consider that the eleven percipients engaged in the experiments were just such persons as the investigator had about him, none of whom possessed any special telepathic powers.

Mind-reading is at least a branch, and may be all, of what is known as clairvoyance. The society has not experimented as yet sufficiently to determine whether the same power may be employed in the reading of matter, as well as mind ; that is, in viewing distant events and scenes, and in the diagnosis of disease ; but still, we may say that the stories

heard in almost all social circles of the success of clairvoyants in these directions are rendered more probable by the establishment of the fact that some persons possess the power to read the minds of others. It may be that clairvoyance, freed from imposture and from the pretence of spiritual communications, and kept within due bounds of sobriety, will prove a useful assistant to the physician and the explorer. In any case, the experiments should be carried much further, so that, if clairvoyance is limited strictly to the realm of thought, the world may know it, and may cease to believe in its wider powers and its spiritualistic accessories, and so that, if it is capable of a greater extension, its exact laws and limitations may be discovered and published, and its employment taken from the hands of infidels, free-lovers, quacks and impostors, and given to the Christian and the man of science.

The spiritualist has long maintained that the prophets of Israel were nothing more than clairvoyants. Should it be proved that clairvoyancy exists, in the broader sense of the word, we shall hear many persons of a much higher grade express the same opinion. It is worth while, therefore, to consider

what answer the Christian should give. On the one hand, he should point out the fact that the Hebrew prophet was no mere reader of the thoughts of other men and of distant or concealed objects and actions. He was sometimes this, as the modern clairvoyant professes to be ; but he was distinguished from the clairvoyant, first, by his accurate and large vision of the future, including the rise and fall of cities and empires, the coming of the Messiah, and the general progress of the human race ; and second, by his lofty moral and religious tone, which made him a reformer, a preacher of righteousness. But, on the other hand, the Christian should cheerfully admit that the prophet may have possessed, as the basis of his gifts, the clairvoyant faculty ; that the true prophet may have been called of God partly because he possessed this faculty ; that the schools in which the young prophets seem to have been trained, as well as other providences attending their development, may have been agencies for the education, the enlargement, and the regulation of this faculty ; and that God may have made use of it in commissioning His messengers to His people and in communicating His mind to the world, as our Lord took the few loaves

and fishes and blessed them when He would feed the thousands by miracle, thus uniting the natural and the supernatural in one work, since both proceed from His hands and are brethren of the same household. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the early forms of prophecy in Israel, after Moses, look somewhat like a purified and ennobled clairvoyance. When Saul went hunting for his father's asses, and failed to find them, his servant advised him to consult Samuel, the man of God. Then the two spoke together as to what sort of present, out of their scanty store, they should take to him as his reward, and finally hit upon "the fourth part of a shekel of silver" as a sufficient payment. The inspired author of this record adds to it the following most curious antiquarian note: "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he said: Come and let us go to the Seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer." The name of "seer," in significance so similar to our word clairvoyant, appears from the whole passage to have been given to him who bore it on account of his ability to see things not visible to ordinary persons, and he afterward acquired the higher titles of "prophet" and "man of God"

because it was perceived that he was something more than a seer. The ordinary perplexities of life, like a journey in search of lost cattle, were submitted to him, and he was paid for his advice. Even as late as the time of Elisha the custom of paying the prophet for his services was maintained ; for when Benhadad was sick he said to Hazael, “ Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and enquire of Jehovah by him, saying, Shall I recover of this sickness ? ” Some prophets seem to have received fuller and more precise revelations than others, Elijah and Elisha having been distinguished in this respect from “ the sons of the prophets,” or learners in the prophetic schools, mentioned in connection with them ; and may it not be that the difference was one of nature as well as of grace, and that these, having had a larger capacity as seers than the others, could be employed by God for the communication of His will, as the others could not, unless they had been first created over again, and changed in the very structure of their being ? Moreover, the faintings, the fallings, the trances of some of the prophets have their analogies among the clairvoyants of our times. In short, should strict investigation show that there is



such a thing as clairvoyancy, I, for one, should have no objection to the view that God took this power of the soul, in many instances, and made use of it as a channel for the communication of His will to His people.

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## V.

MONITIONS; APPARITIONS OF THE LIVING;  
PROPHETIC VISIONS.

HAVING established beyond controversy, as they suppose, the fact that some persons have the power, under favorable conditions, to read the minds of certain others, the members of the British Psychical Society have sought to use this truth as an explanation of various mysteries, and specially of monitions of danger and death. In the "Memoir of Francis Wayland," by his sons, there are the following anecdotes of his mother :

"One or two circumstances in the life of Mrs. Wayland were sufficiently remarkable to merit recital. No explanation of them is attempted. At the time of their removal to America it was the

design of Mr. Wayland and his wife to return in a few years, and visit the relatives whom they had left behind, specially the mother of Mrs. Wayland. This purpose they often spoke of to each other. But one morning, after they had been some years in this country, she said to him, on waking, 'I do not wish to return to England. My mother is dead.' No previous intimation of her ill-health had been received. He, unknown to her, made a minute of the time of her declaration ; and a subsequent arrival brought the news of the event, which had occurred at about the time at which her mind was thus impressed.

"When her son, the subject of this memoir, was expected home from New York, after attending medical lectures there during the winter of 1814-'15, Mrs. Wayland, who was sitting with her husband, suddenly walked the room in great agitation, saying, 'Pray for my son ; Francis is in danger.' So urgent was her request that her husband joined her in prayer for his deliverance from peril. At the expected time he returned. His mother at once asked, 'What has taken place ?' It appeared that, while coming up the North River on a sloop, he had fallen overboard, and the sloop had passed over



him. He was an athletic swimmer, and readily kept himself afloat till he could be rescued. Was it the unspeakable power of a mother's love that imparted a vision more than natural?"—Foot-note, Vol. I., p. 20.

More than a hundred instances similar to this have been collected by the society; they come for the most part from persons now living and of the highest character for veracity; and the witnesses have been cross-examined with care. In a majority of cases the person who receives the monition is a near friend or relative of the one who is in danger or death. The explanation favored by the society is this. In the most successful experiments in mind-reading the experimenter fixes his thought intently upon the image to be transferred to the percipient, for the result depends not altogether upon the clair-voyant powers of the latter, but also in some degree upon the force and clearness of thought of the former. The person who, like the mother of Wayland, receives the monition of danger or death, is a mind-reader; and the person who is in danger or death thinks with agony of the endeared one, who therefore receives a strong and disturbing impression of the event, but knows not whence it comes.

So far as the mind-reading ability of the person receiving the monition is concerned, the explanation is probably correct ; but I doubt whether persons in great danger or at the moment of death usually think with special vividness of their relatives and friends, since, if the mind is not so far enfeebled that it cannot think strongly of any object, it is apt to turn to the danger, and to think exclusively of that. Is it not possible that affection and much friendly intercourse of themselves establish specially sympathetic relations between two persons, so that one may at times receive some monition of the danger of the other, whether that other thinks strongly of the person who receives the monition or not ?

The monition sometimes takes an outward form, and presents itself as a vision, perhaps of sleep, perhaps of the waking state. Not infrequently the endangered or dying person is heard calling, though hundreds of miles distant. In the majority of these instances the person who appears in the vision, or who calls, is found to have died about the time of the occurrence, and hence the superstitious suppose that the spirit of the dead person was permitted to show itself, or to make itself heard, after its departure from the body and before its final depart-

ure from the earth. The majority of those who report these apparitions and voices are the reverse of ghost-seers ; in general each of them has but one solitary instance of the kind to relate, and holds no theory in regard to it. The society has attempted to work out the hypothesis that the apparition is seen or the voice heard just before death, instead of just after it, as the ignorant believe. The person who has the apparition or hears the voice is a mind-reader, and also an endeared friend or relative of the dying person, who, finding himself in imminent peril and about to die, thinks of the other with such unutterable agony and longing as to transfer his image, or the sound of his voice, to the mind of the other. That the impression takes an external form is explained very simply. The nerves of sensation may be disturbed and set in action by external objects ; but they may also be disturbed and set in action by internal forces, by states of the mind. For example, the face may be excited at a particular point by the sensation of tickling, if touched lightly with a straw or a feather ; but one may also create in some point of his face the sensation of tickling merely by fixing his attention upon it and willing it to feel the sensation. So the optic nerve may be

excited to action, in which it has the sensation of seeing, by external objects ; but it may be excited to the same activity, and with the same result, by great agitation of the mind. In the latter case it will have the sensation of seeing the object thought of, and will represent it to the brain as an external thing. Thus the accusing thoughts of Macbeth stimulate his optic nerves so that they present to him the image of a dagger in the air. In short, the optic nerve, when stimulated to action, whether by objects without, or by some intense agitation of the brain with which it is connected, sees, or reports that it sees, since vision is its chief function. Let us suppose now that the suffering man imprints his agony upon the brain of the percipient : then the alarm and agitation of the percipient may excite the optic nerve and give it the impression of seeing the person whose agony has aroused it. Is he sick ? Then it may see him in a reclining posture, and thin and pallid. Is he drowning ? Then it may see him dripping with water. Is he wounded in battle ? Then it may see him covered with blood.

The same thing may be said of the other senses, as the hearing, the smell, the taste, the touch ;

though, as they are less acute, they may be less often disturbed by strong mental excitements.

Such is the theory. It is not free from serious difficulties, the chief of which is the admitted fact that the apparition is sometimes seen or the voice heard after the death of the individual, instead of before. To account for this we have the additional theory of delayed telepathic communications. "There is some reason to think," Mrs. Sidgwick writes, "that a telepathic impression may remain latent for a time, and force itself into consciousness only when quiet, or solitude, or some other condition favorable to its development, intervenes."

If the power of reading minds extends thus to monitions of danger and death, and to apparitions and calls of those who are in great peril or at the point of death, it may cast a certain light upon the visions and voices of Holy Scripture, which were so often the means of divine revelation. According to this view, the thoughts suggested by the Holy Spirit were imprinted upon the mind of the prophet so strongly that they took an external form through the agitation of the nerves of sight or hearing. There is a certain gain for the devout Christian in this view: the agency of God remains as evident,

and the meaning of the vision He created remains as clear, while some light is cast upon the process of His work, and the student of His ways is moved to exclaim, with the ecstasy of Kepler : “ O God, I think Thy thoughts over after Thee ! ” It is as if we could trace His very footsteps as He comes to His servants the prophets, and reveals His will through them by means of symbolic shadows which He gave them to behold and to interpret.

What I have here said refers strictly to prophetic visions, and not at all to those revelations of realities which the prophets sometimes received. The appearance of Moses and Elijah to Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration, and the appearance of Christ to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, were not visions.

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## VI.

### PRAYER.

THE instances of such monitions, apparitions and voices as I have mentioned are so numerous, so well authenticated, and so uniformly connected with the



danger or the death of the person brought before the percipient in this manner, that no doubt can remain either of their frequent occurrence or of their general character. It follows that when one fixes his mind intently upon another, and specially when he is moved to do this by strong agony, he may create in the mind of the other a vivid thought or perhaps image of himself, attended by a tempest of emotion. It is probable that we may go further, and say that his mental state may be reflected in some soul of which he is not thinking at the time, but to which he is bound by ties of affection and sympathy. Such an effect will not be usual, but it will often be produced.

It has long been said by sceptics that prayer cannot accomplish anything, since the infinite God, if there be a God, will not change His eternal purposes in deference to the cries of His finite creatures ; or, to use the language of another school, since the laws of nature are unchangeable. To this objection many cogent replies have been made, and among them appears the suggestion of Chalmers that prayer may itself be a cause in the order of nature capable of producing such effects as we desire. This is proved by the new psychic studies to be to a certain extent

true : intense and agonizing attention fixed upon another may disturb that other mightily, may change the currents of thought and feeling within him, and may suggest our wishes to him. But fervent prayer for another is such intense and agonizing attention fixed upon the other ; and those anecdotes so often heard among Christians, of ardent supplications for an absent person being followed immediately by strange and solemn impressions seizing upon his soul, may have in part a natural explanation. We would not be justified in placing prayer among the stronger physical causes ; but it may well be placed in the category of the strongest psychical causes. Regeneration, the radical change of the nature, is the work of God alone, in answer to the prayer of the Church and of the penitent sinner ; but, while prayer cannot of itself do anything to effect this great revolution, it may, in a natural manner, implant in the impenitent soul a new thought of God, of duty, of heaven, of hell, or of a pious mother ; it may lead him to pause and consider ; it may even kindle within him a temporary longing for better things. It may thus induce him to open the door of his heart, when the Holy Spirit will enter in and accomplish His saving work. Christians should be



encouraged by this discovery to pray for their fellow-men, to pray always, and to pray with fervor.

It seems to be assumed by the experimenters of the British Psychic Society that a percipient will be more apt to succeed in guessing an object or a geometrical figure when a number of persons fix their minds on it than when but one does so. At least, it is very common for a company of them to unite in the experiment with the percipient. I do not know that there is any positive proof of the theory, but it is a natural inference from known facts. If one mind, by fastening its attention upon an object, can set in motion mystic forces capable of affecting another mind, two persons uniting in the effort ought to produce a greater effect, since they constitute a greater cause. The forces, whatever they may be, ought to prove strong in proportion to the number of persons laboring to set them in operation for a given purpose, as the current of electricity is strong in proportion to the number of batteries used to produce it.

Our Lord has made special promises to those who unite in prayer, and the history of the world is full of testimony that He is faithful to these gracious engagements. It is a rule to which there are but

few exceptions that, when a considerable part of any church is aroused to united and importunate prayer for the ungodly, a revival follows. Perhaps the promises and their fulfilment have a basis in the nature of things, since the union of souls in earnest petitions for the lost may set in action forces which disturb the lost and transfer to them something of the anxiety which is felt on their behalf by their Christian friends. Perhaps they are often induced thus to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit, who, finding them willing, enters in and accomplishes His mighty work of regeneration. We have thus a double encouragement to unite in prayer : first, the promises of God, and second, the nature of things as He has created them to fulfil His purposes of love and mercy.

It will be objected that prayer is reduced thus to a mere natural agency. Not so. It is found to be a natural agency, but not a mere natural agency. The moral and spiritual character of the mind-reader is not essentially changed by those who move him temporarily with their thoughts ; he remains the same that he was before. Hence the radical revolution that we know as regeneration cannot be produced by the wishes of Christians,

however earnest they may be. Their thoughts and emotions may be expressed by outward signs, as words, gestures and tears, in which case, though they cannot regenerate the soul of the ungodly, they may move it, and dispose it to seek regeneration. Or again, their thoughts and emotions may be of use in setting in operation mystic forces that shall arrest the ungodly and arouse him to feeling, and so dispose him to seek regeneration. But this is all which man can do by any means at his disposal : God accomplishes the rest. We do not doubt that our agony for impenitent souls is a real means of their salvation when it is expressed in ordinary ways, by words, and gestures, and tears. So, also, we may hold that our agony for souls is a real means of their salvation when it moves them by telepathic processes, without prejudice to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We do not doubt that God often uses natural agencies in answering prayer, such, for example, as our own zeal and benevolence awakened by our own prayers : why, therefore, should we hesitate to recognize as a means by which prayer is answered one more natural agency than we have before thought of ? Thus, while no theoretical difficulty is created by the suggestion that

prayer, and specially united prayer, may be in itself a real cause adequate to produce important effects upon the minds of men, great encouragement may be found in it.

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## VII.

### THE ATMOSPHERE OF ASSEMBLIES.

THE minister accustomed to revivals will remember that he has sometimes found an assembly, when he has entered it, pervaded by what has seemed to him a spiritual atmosphere, that he has then felt assured of a favorable issue of the meeting, and that his confidence has almost always been justified by the result. He will remember the opposite experience of a chilling atmosphere and a spiritless service in which little apparent advance was made. He perceives these different conditions by an immediate intuition, before anything is said to reveal them. Moreover, the spiritual atmosphere of an assembly is often changed by the coming in of new elements : an assembly in the beginning warm and enthusiastic may be chilled by the entrance of a

large number of the indifferent or the hostile, though they conduct themselves with entire propriety ; as an assembly in the beginning cold and dreary may be filled with sweet, constraining power by the entrance of a large number of devout and prayerful persons. Sometimes the entrance of one person of either class, if he be of a large and commanding nature, may effect a great change in the atmosphere of the place. The leader of a meeting which seems chilly and constrained may bring into it a spring-tide of melting influences by his own importunate prayers lifted to heaven in silence, and also by exhorting the Christians present to engage in special prayers for the presence of the Holy Spirit. In such assemblies, where sharp and earnest appeals are made to the impenitent, it is as if there were a warfare of souls beneath the surface, the saints contending in silence with the impenitent sinners. Perhaps these things may be explained in part by telepathy. Here we see how important it is that Christians should unite in attending the services of the Church, and in prayer for the preacher and for those to whom he brings his holy message.

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## VIII.

## PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS IN REVIVALS.

THE majority of our modern revivals are as quiet and orderly as the usual Sabbath service. But in former days revivals were often attended with violent physical manifestations. Under Wesley faintings, fallings and convulsions were common. The early Methodist camp-meetings were wild scenes. In our Western States an affection commonly called "the jerks" attended them, and in clearing the space in the woods to be occupied by the people, the stumps of the smaller trees were left high, so that any one seized with this singular malady might hold on to them, and thus to a certain extent mitigate the severity of his convulsions. The great revival in Ireland, which occurred within our own memory, was attended with many such physical effects. At the first thought we are disposed to say that these disturbances were produced by the high religious enthusiasm of those who exhibited them ; but it is easy to show the contrary, for the religious enthusiast was usually exempt, while those who came to gaze in curiosity or to mock in enmity



were the most frequent victims. It is no longer difficult to find a plausible explanation of these things : vast numbers of Christians came together, and their thoughts and prayers concerned the indifferent and the hostile almost wholly. If the drowning man, by the intense agony with which he thinks of his distant wife, can sometimes communicate to her his own feeling of alarm, cause her to suppose that she hears his voice, or present to her a vision of his person in dripping garments, it should not seem incredible that the overwhelming emotions once indulged by Christians in seasons of special religious interest should have produced some startling physical effect through those for whom they labored and prayed. No doubt these physical disturbances were often mistaken for the special work of the Holy Spirit, and for regeneration, and were thus the means of bringing into the churches some unconverted persons ; but possibly we have gone to the opposite extreme, and by our endeavors to extrude all deep emotions from our modern revivals have sacrificed a valuable element of genuine religious power.

The strange and infective influence of the convulsionaries of the Middle Ages, so like the physi-

cal influence which once attended revivals, is to be explained in the same manner.

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## IX.

### MIND-CURE ; PRAYER-CURE ; FAITH-CURE.

OUR discussion shows us that there may be a basis in nature for the so-called mind-cure, prayer-cure and faith-cure, all of which have large features in common. If I fix my mind earnestly upon a person, I may succeed in disturbing his mind by the mere exercise of my own ; I may move his brain ; I may affect his nervous system ; and hence, by directing my attention to some particular part of his body which is diseased, I may possibly excite it to healthy action or may turn to it currents of vital and healing force. Thus much is possible. But this method of cure, if successful at all, since its operation is directly upon the brain and nerves, would achieve its chief triumphs in nervous diseases, as, in fact, it seems to do. Moreover, as the processes of telepathy, and the monitions of the endan-



gered and the dying, are fitful and uncertain, depending upon many obscure conditions, so we might expect to find this process of healing, as in fact we do. Hence those who would make it a substitute for the ordinary care of the physician commit a crime against human life. But it may prove a valuable addition to the science of healing, and the physician should not despise it as unworthy of his attention. The friends of the sick should be encouraged to pray fervently for them, knowing that God will be moved by their wishes, and will so order His providences as to fulfil their petitions, if this is best, and also that they themselves, by the very earnestness and determination of their souls, may contribute to the cure.

Still further. When God determines to heal the sick by a direct interference for their benefit, it may be that He operates through the same law that the mind-curer uses. If so, He employs natural law in effecting the recovery, instead of violating it; and thus we remove the common objection of the sceptic to the doctrine that He raises up the sick in answer to our prayers. We are brought thus to the exhilarating conception that in praying for the sick we are working "together with God," and in

the exact manner in which He works ; and also that He, in answering our petitions, honors us by associating us with Him in the very process of accomplishing the gracious deed.

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## X.

### REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

It is often asked how God could reveal Himself immediately to the souls of holy men, and how He could inspire them with His thoughts, unless by such a violation of natural law as would amount to their recreation, their transformation into unhuman or superhuman beings. For is not each soul enclosed within walls which can be entered only through the gates of the five senses ? Is it possible for God, unless He change its nature, to reach it in any other way than the ordinary avenues of approach open to all comers ? Must not He draw near it, if at all, by means of external nature, which shows His power, His wisdom, and to a certain extent His kindness ? Is not the doctrine of the di-

rect inbreathing of His thought disproved, since man has no capacity to receive thought in this manner? The new psychic studies tend to remove the difficulty, by showing that there are persons capable by nature of receiving thought in this very way. The majority of men have little of such capacity ; and we may see in this fact a reason why God does not communicate His truth immediately to all who seek it in sincerity ; the mass of them are not fitted by the nature with which He has endowed them to receive His thoughts by direct impression, and therefore He will proceed upon a different plan, unless He determine to alter their nature by a creative act. A few men out of the whole race have the capacity to receive His thought by direct impression, and He will select from these such as are most perfectly fitted for the purpose, and will inspire them and commission them to make known His truth to the world. Thus one great objection to the doctrine of inspiration is removed, and the limitation of inspiration to a few is explained, while also a flood of light is cast on the process of inspiration. Furthermore, as there are persons who can take into their minds a specially clear and accurate transcript of the thoughts of others, it is no longer difficult to

see how men were made capable of infallible inspiration, through whose agency we possess the very truth, with no admixture of error. The illustration becomes yet more valuable when we consider that in telepathy of all degrees of clearness and accuracy, even the highest, the percipient is in the full possession of his consciousness, exercises his will freely, and is in an active rather than a passive state.

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## XI.

### MESMERISM ; DEMONIAK POSSESSION.

THE researches of the British society emphasize in the strongest manner the reality of mesmerism. Before the formation of the society mesmerism had already been lifted to a respectable position among men of science by the experiments of Braid and Carpenter ; but the society has made it a subject of interest to the whole world, and has cleared away some of the errors into which Braid and Carpenter fell in their discussion of it. Carpenter reduced mesmerism to the mere expectant attention

of the subject, and denied that the silent will of the operator fixed upon the subject had any influence upon the result. Ten men are told to look steadfastly at a coin, or at the metallic ferule of a walking-stick, and are made to believe that in a few minutes they will sink to sleep. The object at which they gaze is sufficiently bright to aid them in fastening their vision upon it, and their minds are thus withdrawn from surrounding objects and released from ordinary distractions. At the same time, they fully expect to slumber. The result is that the more yielding and facile among them are soon found to be in a strange sleep, as they had anticipated. Were there no operator, and did the ten men agree among themselves to go through the process, and did they expect to fall asleep as the result of it, the same persons would actually fall asleep. There is no special unexplained influence of one mind upon another, but only the influence of the mind upon itself: the slumber is produced solely by monotonous attention to one object, with the expectancy of slumber. Such in substance is the teaching of Carpenter, upon which he insists in the strongest manner. But the researches of the British Psychical Society decidedly discredit it, and

show beyond a doubt that, while some may be able to throw themselves into the mesmeric state by their own will, or by their expectant attention, the majority of subjects must be assisted to enter it by the will of another, to which they yield themselves.

When the subject is once thoroughly immersed in the mesmeric sleep, can the operator control him by a thought, a silent determination that he must act in particular ways, or must the operator resort to external indications of his will, as words, or significant gestures, or touches of the phrenological bumps which are supposed by the subject to be connected with various traits of character and to dictate certain kinds of words and deeds? I am told that the member of the American society who has studied mesmerism most carefully has achieved no success in his efforts to control his subjects by the unexpressed fiat of his will, but is obliged to give them some indication of his wishes through the ordinary channels of communication between men. Braid and Carpenter maintain that this is always necessary. But the committee of the British society to which this branch of study was assigned report that they get the clearest evidence in certain cases of the power of the operator to control his



subjects without the use of signs. They refer to instances of the closest mental connection between the subject and the operator, in which the subject feels the mental states of the operator as if they were his own, and obeys the will of the operator as if it were his own. If the operator is pinched in the arm, or the leg, or the hand, the subject complains of pain in his arm, or leg, or hand, and at length grows angry. By a silent determination of the operator the tongue of the subject is paralyzed, so that he cannot speak, or is loosed and set in motion. Not all subjects enter into this state of absolute possession by the operator; perhaps few do so; but there seems to be no doubt that some are found so susceptible to the mesmeric influence, whatever this may be, that they may be led to such a temporary surrender of their own powers to another as renders them obedient to the slightest behest of the mind to which they have submitted themselves, even when no external sign conveys it to them. The negative results of some experiments cannot in the least invalidate the positive results of others: the failure of Kane to find any traces of Sir John Franklin does not discredit the success of M'Clintock.



We do not know as yet just what physiological processes mesmerism involves. The British society is inclined to regard telepathy and mesmerism as essentially the same, to see in telepathy the incipient form of mesmerism, and in mesmerism the extreme form of telepathy. The view will probably not prevail, for it is encumbered with formidable difficulties, the chief of which is the fact that the telepathic percipient is in no sense under the control of the operator, preserves his full self-consciousness, is in an active state of mind, and is as free from all symptoms of mesmeric slumber as is the operator himself.

But be this as it may, every thoughtful Christian must be struck with the analogies between mesmerism and the demoniac possessions of the New Testament. If spirits in the flesh can gain almost complete possession of others, why may not spirits out of the flesh? Henceforth the anecdotes of demoniac possession found in the Holy Scriptures must not be denied on the ground that such possession is impossible; for it is found to be quite in accordance with the processes of nature which may be observed at any time, if a little care be taken.

## XII.

## MODERN DEMONS.

THE subject of spiritualism has not yet been fully investigated by either the British or the American society, and some years must probably pass before any definite conclusion with reference to it can be reached. Many of its marvels are now known to be mere tricks of persons interested in making money. It is generally admitted, however, that there are others which cannot be explained in this convenient way ; and it must remain for the present an open question whether spiritualism does not present to us on a broad scale a revival of demonism. That many of its spirits, whether they are in the flesh or without, are “unclean spirits” is abundantly proved by the antipathy manifested in its “messages” to our holy religion, and by the disastrous moral results to which it leads many of its devotees.

While spiritualism, as a whole, has not been studied exhaustively by either of the societies, that part of it which is known by the name of “planchette” has received much attention, and has been

made the subject of two elaborate papers by Mr. F. W. H. Myers, entitled "Automatic Writing," and published in the proceedings of the British society. The title indicates the opinion of the author; he holds that there is nothing more in the writing of planchette than, first, the unconscious action of the mind of the person whose hand is in contact with the table, and, second, the unconscious action of the minds of the spectators upon the mind of the writer, affecting it by the telepathic process. The explanation which he attempts is cumbrous and labored to the last degree, and will hardly satisfy the unprejudiced reader. Nor does it satisfy its author, who near the close of his work makes room for the spiritualistic hypothesis of the intervention of the dead in the writing of planchette. I wish to point out the evidence of demoniac agency, which it seems to me he has furnished unwittingly. One of the principal experimenters with planchette, whose testimony Mr. Myers cites at length, is the Rev. P. H. Newnham, Vicar of Maker, Davenport, England. Near the end of the report which this gentleman makes of the experiments with planchette conducted by his wife and himself, he says: "It is impossible for me to close this paper

without again very urgently calling attention to what I have termed the low 'moral' character of the reacting intelligence. We are all familiar with this phenomenon in the average experience of so-called 'spiritual controls,' but in these cases the 'controlled' medium is more or less hypnotic and unconscious. And I think that the recurrence of the same phenomenon in the case of a person in perfect health, and in the enjoyment of perfect consciousness, is worthy of very serious consideration." The person referred to is his wife, who was the operator of the planchette-table. Going back to the body of his report, we find instances of this low moral tone, on one of which he comments as follows: "In these last answers we see a new moral element introduced. There is evasion or subterfuge, of a more or less ingenious kind, and totally foreign to the whole character and natural disposition of the operator." Again he points out "a similar attempt at deliberate invention, rather than plead guilty to total ignorance." In yet another place he speaks of "a total indifference to truth for its own sake, coupled with what looks like a morbid dread of seeming to be ignorant of the reply to the question." Mr. Myers himself says: "There is

another peculiarity of the early stages of automatic writing which it has somewhat embarrassed spiritualists to explain. 'Planchette,' automatists often testify, 'is sadly given to swear.' Especially when the hand is exhausted by a long and somewhat barren effort, the word 'devil' will sometimes be written over and over again, with an energy which shocks the unsuspecting writer." The low moral tone of the intelligence which governs planchette is proved first by a childish vanity which cannot bear to admit that it is ignorant of anything, and which reminds us of the "pride" supposed by many interpreters of the Scriptures to have been "the snare of the devil," which led to his fall; secondly, by foolish and conscienceless falsehood, proceeding from spirits who have studied diligently in the school of "the father of lies," whether they are in the flesh or not; and, thirdly, by profane language. Where the operator and the spectators are persons of ordinary decency and truthfulness, the effort to trace such utterances to them seems to me necessarily futile. The supposition of demoniac agency is the most natural that we can entertain. If the intelligence appears to be weak and foolish as it is wicked, this is but another respect in which it re-

sembles the demons of the New Testament, whose mental power is always of a very low kind.

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### XIII.

#### HAUNTED HOUSES ; DEMONS.

IN the beginning of its labors the British Society for Psychical Research manifested a tendency to explain everything which it investigated as a case of mind-reading. This is seen in its treatment of apparitions ; its theory in the beginning was that they proceed uniformly from the living. Its investigations of haunted houses, however, brought before it a mass of facts which could not be accounted for in this manner. The society has collected an immense number of narratives of events which believers in ghosts “ would be apt to refer to the agency of deceased human beings.” Of these, there are three hundred and seventy which seem to deserve special consideration. The great majority of this group may be passed by as not absolutely convincing. But Mrs.



Sidgwick, the wife of the late President of the society, who writes the very able review of the evidence, and may be supposed to represent the opinions of her husband, considers eighteen of these narratives as sufficient to prove the existence of haunted houses. After stating and discussing them at length, she expresses her conclusion as follows : “ I can only say that, having made every effort, as my paper will, I hope, have shown, to exercise a reasonable scepticism, I yet do not feel equal to the degree of unbelief in human testimony necessary to avoid accepting, at least provisionally, the conclusion that there are, in a certain sense, haunted houses ; that is, that there are houses in which similar quasi-human apparitions have occurred at different times to different inhabitants, under circumstances which exclude the hypothesis of suggestion or expectation.”

The following extract from the report of the committee on haunted houses will be sufficient to illustrate the great care with which the enquiry is conducted :

“ It seems desirable that we should explain clearly the standard that we adopt in estimating the claims of any narrative to be included in our list.



In the first place, we of course begin by tracing every story to its fountain-head. But we do not consider that every first-hand narration of the appearance of a ghost, even from a thoroughly trustworthy narrator, gives us adequate reason for attempting further investigation. On the contrary, our general principle is that the unsupported evidence of a single witness does not constitute sufficient ground for accepting an apparition as having a *prima facie* claim to objective reality. To distinguish any apparition from an ordinary hallucination, such as those recorded by Abercrombie, Brewster, Carpenter, and others, it must receive some independent evidence to corroborate it. And this corroboration may be of two kinds : we may have the consentient testimony of several witnesses ; or there may be some point of external agreement and coincidence, unknown, as such, to the seer at the time, as, for example, the periodic appearance on a particular anniversary, or the recognition of a peculiar dress, to give to the vision an objective foundation. As regards the first of these two cases, there is a distinction to be drawn which is of the greatest importance, though commonly neglected. It may often happen that several persons misinter-

pret the same phenomenon in the same manner, exemplifying what is called 'collective delusion.' But neither science nor the common experience of life has produced any undoubted cases analogous to what, in this department, has been designated 'collective hallucination,' that is, the observation and identical description by several persons of an appearance having no basis in reality."

Did my space permit, I should introduce here the narratives on which Mrs. Sidgwick bases her conviction that there are haunted houses. Instead of these, I shall cite an instance of the same kind from the writings of Rev. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist societies. His statement, which I reproduce in full from the "Memoirs of the Wesley Family," by Dr. Adam Clarke, the commentator, has become a classic in the discussion of the subject, and is referred to by all his biographers of any note as of the highest importance. In the volume from which I quote it, as also in Southey's "Life of Wesley," it is accompanied by the corroborative statements of numerous other witnesses, chiefly the members of his father's household.

*Narrative drawn up by Mr. John Wesley, and published by him in the Arminian Magazine.*

“ When I was very young I heard several letters read, wrote to my elder brother by my father, giving an account of strange disturbances which were in his house at Epworth, in Lincolnshire.

“ When I went down thither, in the year 1720, I carefully inquired into the particulars. I spoke to each of the persons who were then in the house, and took down what each could testify of his or her own knowledge, the sum of which was this :

“ On December 2d, 1716, while Robert Brown, my father’s servant, was sitting with one of the maids, a little before ten at night, in the dining-room which opened into the garden, they both heard one knocking at the door. Robert rose and opened it, but could see nobody. Quickly it knocked again, and groaned. ‘ It is Mr. Turpine,’ said Robert ; ‘ he has the stone, and uses to groan so.’ He opened the door again twice or thrice, the knocking being twice or thrice repeated ; but still seeing nothing, and being a little startled, they rose and went up to bed. When Robert came to the top of the garret stairs he saw a hand-mill, which was at

a little distance, whirled about very swiftly. When he related this, he said, 'Nought vexed me but that it was empty. I thought, if it had but been full of malt, he might have ground his heart out for me.' When he was in bed he heard as it were the gobbling of a turkey-cock close to the bedside, and soon after the sound as of one stumbling over his shoes and boots, but there were none there; he had left them below. The next day he and the maid related these things to the other maid, who laughed heartily, and said, 'What a couple of fools are you! I defy anything to fright me.' After churning in the evening she put the butter in the tray, and had no sooner carried it into the dairy than she heard a knocking on the shelf where several puncheons of milk stood, first above the shelf, then below. She took the candle, and searched both above and below; but, being able to find nothing, threw down butter, tray, and all, and ran away for her life. The next evening, between five and six o'clock, my sister Molly, then about twenty years of age, sitting in the dining-room reading, heard as if it were the door that led into the hall open, and a person walking in, that seemed to have on a silk night-gown, rustling and trailing. It

seemed to walk round her, then to the door, then round again ; but she could see nothing. She thought, ‘ It signifies nothing to run away ; for, whatever it is, it can run faster than me.’ So she rose, put her book under her arm, and walked slowly away. After supper she was sitting with her sister Sukey (about a year older than her) in one of the chambers, and telling her what had happened ; she made quite light of it, telling her, ‘ I wonder you are so easily frightened ; I would fain see what would fright me.’ Presently a knocking began under the table. She took the candle and looked, but could find nothing. Then the iron casement began to clatter, and the lid of a warming-pan. Next the latch of the door moved up and down without ceasing. She started up, leaped into the bed without undressing, pulled the bedclothes over her head, and never ventured to look up till next morning. A night or two after my sister Hetty, a year younger than my sister Molly, was waiting, as usual, between nine and ten, to take away my father’s candle, when she heard one coming down the garret stairs, walking slowly by her, then going down the best stairs, then up the back stairs, and up the garret stairs ; and at every step

it seemed the house shook from top to bottom. Just then my father knocked. She went in, took his candle, and got to bed as fast as possible. In the morning she told this to my eldest sister, who told her, ' You know I believe none of these things ; pray let me take away the candle to-night, and I will find out the trick.' She accordingly took my sister Hetty's place, and had no sooner taken away the candle than she heard a noise below. She hastened down-stairs to the hall, where the noise was, but it was then in the kitchen. She ran into the kitchen, where it was drumming on the inside of the screen. When she went round it was drumming on the outside, and so always on the side opposite to her. Then she heard a knocking at the back kitchen door. She ran to it, unlocked it softly, and when the knocking was repeated suddenly opened it, but nothing was to be seen. As soon as she had shut it the knocking began again. She opened it again, but could see nothing. When she went to shut the door, it was violently thrust against her ; she let it fly open, but nothing appeared. She went again to shut it, and it was again thrust against her ; but she put her knee and her shoulder to the door, forced it to, and turned



the key. Then the knocking began again ; but she let it go on, and went up to bed. However, from that time she was thoroughly convinced that there was no imposture in the affair.

“ The next morning my sister, telling my mother what had happened, she said, ‘ If I hear anything myself, I shall know how to judge.’ Soon after she begged her to come into the nursery. She did, and heard in the corner of the room as it were the violent rocking of a cradle, but no cradle had been there for some years. She was convinced it was preternatural, and earnestly prayed it might not disturb her in her own chamber at the hours of retirement, and it never did. She now thought it was proper to tell my father. But he was extremely angry, and said, ‘ Sukey, I am ashamed of you. These boys and girls frighten one another, but you are a woman of sense, and should know better. Let me hear of it no more.’

“ At six in the evening he had family prayers, as usual. When he began the prayer for the king a knocking began all round the room, and a thundering knock attended the Amen. The same was heard from this time every morning and evening while the prayer for the king was repeated. As



both my father and mother are now at rest, and incapable of being pained thereby, I think it my duty to furnish the serious reader with a key to this circumstance.

“The year before King William died my father observed my mother did not say Amen to the prayer for the king. She said she could not, for she did not believe the Prince of Orange was king. He vowed he never would cohabit with her till she did. He then took his horse and rode away; nor did she hear anything of him for a twelvemonth. He then came back, and lived with her as before. But I fear his vow was not forgotten before God.

“Being informed that Mr. Hoole, the Vicar of Haxey (an eminently pious and sensible man), could give me some further information, I walked over to him. He said, ‘Robert Brown came over to me, and told me your father desired my company. When I came he gave an account of all that had happened, particularly the knocking during family prayer. But that evening, to my great satisfaction, we had no knocking at all. But between nine and ten a servant came in, and said, “Old Jeffrey is coming (that was the name of one that died in the house), for I hear the signal.”’

This, they informed me, was heard every night about a quarter before ten. It was toward the top of the house on the outside, at the north-east corner, resembling the loud creaking of a saw, or rather that of a windmill when the body of it is turned about in order to shift the sails to the wind. We then heard a knocking over our heads ; and Mr. Wesley, catching up a candle, said, “ Come, sir, now you shall hear for yourself.” We went up stairs, he with much hope, and I (to say the truth) with much fear. When we came into the nursery it was knocking in the next room ; when we were there it was knocking in the nursery. And there it continued to knock, though we came in, particularly at the head of the bed (which was of wood), in which Miss Hetty and two of her younger sisters lay. Mr. Wesley, observing that they were much affected, though asleep, sweating, and trembling exceedingly, was very angry ; and pulling out a pistol, was going to fire at the place from which the sounds came. But I caught him by the arm, and said, “ Sir, you are convinced this is something preternatural. If so, you cannot hurt it, but you give it power to hurt you.” He then went close to the place, and said, sternly, “ Thou deaf and dumb

devil, why dost thou fright these children, that cannot answer for themselves? Come to me in my study, that am a man!" Instantly it knocked his knock (the particular knock which he always used at the gate), as if it would shiver the board in pieces, and we heard nothing more that night.'

"Till this time my father had never heard the least disturbances in his study. But the next evening, as he attempted to go into his study (of which none had any key but himself), when he opened the door it was thrust back with such violence as had like to have thrown him down. However, he thrust the door open and went in. Presently there was knocking, first on one side, then on the other; and, after a time, in the next room, where my sister Nancy was. He went into that room, and, the noise continuing, adjured it to speak; but in vain. He then said, 'These spirits love darkness; put out the candle, and perhaps it will speak.' She did so, and he repeated his adjuration; but still there was only knocking, and no articulate sound. Upon this he said, 'Nancy, two Christians are an overmatch for the devil. Go all of you downstairs; it may be when I am alone he will have courage to speak.' When she was gone a thought

came in, and he said, ‘If thou art the spirit of my son Samuel, pray knock three knocks, and no more.’ Immediately all was silence, and there was no more knocking all that night. I asked my sister Nancy, then about fifteen years old, whether she was not afraid when my father used that adjuration? She answered she was sadly afraid it would speak when she put out the candle, but she was not at all afraid in the daytime, when it walked after her as she swept the chambers, and seemed to sweep after her; only she thought it might have done it for her, and saved her the trouble. By this time all my sisters were so accustomed to these noises that they gave them little disturbance. A gentle tapping at their bed-head usually began between nine and ten at night. Then they commonly said to each other, ‘Jeffrey is coming; it is time to go to sleep.’ And if they heard a noise in the day, and said to my younger sister, ‘Hark, Kezzy, Jeffrey is knocking above,’ she would run up-stairs, and pursue it from room to room, saying she desired no better diversion.

“A few nights after, my father and mother were just gone to bed, and the candle was not taken away, when they heard three blows, and a second,

and a third three, as it were with a large oaken staff, struck upon a chest which stood by the bedside. My father immediately arose, put on his night-gown, and, hearing great noises below, took the candle, and went down ; my mother walked by his side. As they went down the broad stairs they heard as if a vessel full of silver was poured upon my mother's breast, and ran jingling down to her feet. Quickly after there was a sound as if a large iron ball was thrown among many bottles under the stairs, but nothing was hurt. Soon after our large mastiff dog came and ran to shelter himself between them. While the disturbances continued he used to bark and leap, and snap on one side and the other, and that frequently before any person in the room heard any noise at all. But after two or three days he used to tremble, and creep away before the noise began. And by this the family knew it was at hand, nor did the observation ever fail. A little before my father and mother came into the hall it seemed as if a very large coal was violently thrown upon the floor, and dashed all in pieces, but nothing was seen. My father then cried out, ' Sukey, did you not hear ? All the pewter is thrown about the kitchen.' But

when they looked all the pewter stood in its place. There then was a loud knocking at the back door. My father opened it, but saw nothing. It was then at the foredoor. He opened that, but it was still lost labor. After opening first the one, then the other, several times, he turned, and went up to bed. But the noises were so violent all over the house that he could not sleep till four in the morning.

“Several gentlemen and clergymen now earnestly advised my father to quit the house. But he constantly answered, ‘No ; let the devil flee from me ; I will never flee from the devil.’ But he wrote to my eldest brother at London to come down. He was preparing so to do, when another letter came, informing him the disturbances were over, after they had continued (the latter part of the time day and night) from the second of December to the end of January.”

Still more remarkable were the disturbances which occurred in the house of Rev. Eliakim Phelps, D.D., at Stratford, Conn. He was the father of Rev. Austin Phelps, D.D., for so many years the distinguished Professor of Homiletics at Andover, Mass., and the author of numerous well-



known works of instruction and devotion. The narrative is too long for use in these pages ; but the reader will find it in a volume entitled “ Spiritual Manifestations,” by Rev. Charles Beecher, as well as in a variety of other publications dealing with the same subject. The events are characterized thus by Dr. Austin Phelps in his recent book, “ My Portfolio,” at page 15 :

“ It was after his retirement from public life that he became interested in spiritualism. It would be more truthful to say that it became interested in him ; for it came upon him without his seeking, suddenly invading his household, and making a pandemonium of it for seven months, and then departing as suddenly as it came. The phenomena resembled those which for many years afflicted the Wesley family, and those which at one time attended the person of Oberlin. They were an almost literal repetition of some of the records left by Cotton Mather. Had my father lived in 1650, instead of 1850, he and his family would have lived in history with the victims on Tower Hill in Salem. That the facts were real, a thousand witnesses testified. An eminent judge in the State of New York said that he had pronounced sentence of death on



many a criminal on a tithe of the evidence which supported these facts. That they were inexplicable by any known principles of science was equally clear to all who saw and heard them who were qualified to judge. Experts in science went to Stratford in triumphant expectation, and came away in dogged silence, convinced of nothing, yet solving nothing. If modern science had nothing to show more worthy of respect than its solutions of spiritualism, alchemy would be its equal, and astrology infinitely its superior. It will never do to confine a delusion so seductive to the ignorant and so welcome to the sceptic to the limbo of 'an if,' and leave it there.

“To my father, the whole thing was a visitation from God. He bowed to the affliction in sorrow and in prayer. He never gave credence to it as a revelation of religious truth for an hour. The only point in which it affected his interpretation of the Scriptures was that of the biblical demonology. When science failed to give him an explanation which deserved respect, he fell back upon the historic faith of the Christian Church in the personality and activity of angels, good and evil. He held the scriptural demonology as a tentative explana-

tion of spiritualism until science could furnish something better."

Let us now return to the work of the British society. Mrs. Sidgwick does not regard it as proved that the phantasms associated with haunted houses proceed from spirits of the dead, or indeed from any kind of spirits. She considers it possible that one person has an hallucination, in which what he supposes to be a ghost appears to him, and that he propagates to other minds, by an unconscious telepathic process, by a sort of mental infection, the impression made upon his own; which would account for the fact that the same figure is seen by various observers. Or again, she suggests as possibly true the theory that there may be some occult quality in the house itself which causes those who inhabit it to see human forms and hear mysterious sounds. It must be confessed that it is not easy to accept either of these explanations after reading the narratives which Mrs. Sidgwick gives.

But when we turn to the popular theory that the phantasms are the appearances of the dead, we are confronted with an enormous difficulty, which Mrs. Sidgwick states as follows: "There is a total absence of any apparent object or intelligent action on

the part of the ghost. If its visits have an object, it entirely fails to explain it. It does not communicate important facts. It does not point out lost wills or hidden treasure. It does not even speak.”

The difficulty is even greater than it is here represented to be, for the ghost usually acts in a manner indicating insanity or idiocy. In one narrative it is a tall man dressed in a frock coat, who comes into a particular chamber every night and stands gazing down upon the occupant of the bed. In another narrative it is a tall man with a very pale face and dark hair and mustache ; the expression of his countenance is sorrowful ; sometimes he is seen peeping around the side of an open doorway ; sometimes he steals up behind the lady of the house, and slaps her familiarly on the back ; and sometimes he is heard saying in a tone of deep grief, “I can’t find it.” In another narrative the ghost is a woman dressed as a housemaid, who is usually seen as she is in the act of turning around corners and going to the door when the bell rings, and is heard in a particular dressing-room industriously moving the furniture, though no change is effected in the arrangement of the various articles. In another narrative, whose scene is India, the

ghost is a woman dressed in the costume of the natives, haunting the sleeping-rooms on one particular side of the house, and always vanishing when addressed or pursued. In another narrative the ghost is a woman dressed in the garb of a widow, and always holding a handkerchief to her forehead and weeping, sometimes audibly. In one case the ghost spends the night in digging, so that the sound of its mattock or its spade is very distinct, though the earth is not disturbed ; in another it employs itself in making the night hideous with the crash of breaking glass or pottery ; in another it displays a fondness for heat, standing near the fireplace or the stove, but vanishing when addressed. In short, not a single ghost of all that are brought before us in this collection of narratives seems to have any purpose, to act in a rational manner, to accomplish anything. Put these ghosts together in a building ; let them exhibit the human form and act as they do in these narratives ; then introduce a physician to the company, and ask him to give his opinion of it. He will say that he is in an asylum for the insane and idiotic, some of whom are so violent and uproarious as to make it a bedlam. This is one evidence of the truth of the

narratives which we ought not to overlook : were they the inventions of ingenious men, or were even a part of them made for the occasion, they would not exhibit such uniform consistency of aimlessness and unreason.

My conclusion is this. If we regard these apparitions as real beings, we must suppose either that insanity and idiocy are carried beyond the grave, and are granted the exclusive privilege of remaining upon the earth and haunting the houses of its inhabitants, making it a vast asylum for the disembodied insane, or else that the phantoms are not of the human race. Now, the demons of the New Testament never appear in forms other than those of the victims whom they possess ; yet they are sometimes associated with the insanity of their victims, with epilepsy, and with deafness and dumbness. When driven out of a human victim, whom they have rendered insane, they commit an insane action in the swine, driving the hapless animals into the lake, and impelling them to drown themselves. The conduct of the ghosts to which Mrs. Sidgwick introduces us resembles that of these demons much more than that of ordinary men and women. While I express this opinion, I do not wish to be under-

stood as supposing that the evidence for it is very cogent ; I only wish to say that if obliged to choose between the theory that the ghost is a disembodied human spirit and the theory that it is a demon, I should feel compelled to the latter. The whole subject is greatly in need of further investigation.

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#### XIV.

##### HAUNTED HOUSES ; THE HISTORY OF BALAAM.

WHEN Balaam started on his mission of evil to the land of Moab, the beast on which he rode saw the angel of Jehovah thrice before its master became aware of the celestial spirit. I have been reminded of this several times in reading Mrs. Sidgwick's paper on ghosts. "We have," she says, "several accounts of horses being frightened in places supposed to be haunted, where their riders or drivers see nothing." We must not attach too much importance to such statements, for, as she adds, "horses are nervous animals, and it is diffi-



cult to exhaust the possible causes of their alarm.” But there are accounts of a kindred nature touching the experiences of human beings, as, for instance, the following : “ Once Mrs. Townsend was greatly startled by a tremendous crash, which Mr. Townsend did not hear at all.” Again : “ Sometimes two or three people heard the noises, or were woke up by them. At other times only one person would hear them. On one New Year’s Eve, when Miss T—— and N—— were alone in the house, N—— came up from the kitchen to the dining-room, where Miss T—— was sitting, to see what was the matter. He had heard loud noises, as of furniture being dragged about in the dining-room. Miss T—— had heard nothing, and the house seemed perfectly quiet. On another occasion Miss T—— heard the same noise, as of furniture being moved, etc., in the room above hers, which was occupied by her brother, Mr. T——. She went up to see what was the matter, and knocked at his door, but he was fast asleep.” The query is suggested by such statements whether it is one of the distinguishing capacities of spirits to reveal themselves to certain individuals in a company, while remaining concealed from others. There seems to be the best evidence



that animals as well as men may become aware of these phantasms and noises, and be alarmed by them. Take the following as a specimen of it : “ I was awoke by the dog barking about twelve o’clock. The barking stopped, but I heard what sounded like steps down-stairs. Very soon the old noises began in our little library : jumping about, the window rattling, the whole place shaking, till my windows rattled, too. The dog whined incessantly, and the banging and jumping seemed to grow more and more boisterous. I got up and made some noise with the furniture in my room, lighted my candles, and went into the landing to listen if there were noises in the other part of the house ; but all was perfectly quiet there, though in the little room down-stairs the dog seemed to grow more and more distressed, and the noises continued more violently than ever. I listened to them till three o’clock, and as there seemed no chance of their stopping, I left my room and passed the rest of the night at Helen’s. The dog evidently was still afraid of the room when the morning came. I called to him to go into it with me, and he crouched down with his tail between his legs, and seemed to fear entering it.”

## XV.

## RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

WE have now followed the steps of the Society for Psychological Research through almost the whole field of its investigations ; we have reached the end of our journey ; and it may be well to turn back, look over the way we have come, and consider how much of it lies on sure and safe ground, and how much along the dizzy and perilous verge of conjecture. 1. We may place mind-reading among the assured facts of science, though in its clearer forms it is seldom met with. 2. The existence of mesmerism cannot be disputed, and henceforth only its nature, its limitations, and its practical uses will be debated by its students. 3. It must be admitted that persons who are in danger or are about to die sometimes transmit to their friends and relatives, though separated from them by great distances, their apparitions and their voices.

Among the subjects still left in a state of uncertainty, we may place clairvoyance, in the broader sense of the word, and haunted houses.

The Christian has no reason to regret the work

already done by the Psychical Society, or to fear that which is to follow ; on the contrary, he may hope to learn much that shall tend to confute infidelity, to break the bonds of superstition, to check vice and crime, and to illustrate the teachings of his holy religion. The so-called "ghosts," which have been the subjects of patient investigation, may be but the figments of the imagination ; but if they have any substantial existence, they exhibit few attributes of humanity except the outward form ; and we might admit the truth of all the narratives collected by the society without abandoning the ordinary view that the realm of the dead is

" The undiscovered country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns."

Much remains to be done in all the departments of investigation brought before us in these pages, and there are other departments scarcely touched as yet, as clairvoyance, spiritualism, and the Buddhistic occultism. In pursuing his researches in these regions, the devout enquirer walks through such a murky atmosphere and meets so many dim and evil shapes, that he must often recoil from the task, as did Dante on his pilgrimage through hell :

“ I felt my hair stand all on end already  
With terror, and stood backwardly intent.”

But as the journey of the poet led him to Paradise, so the studies into which the Society for Psychical Research would conduct us can issue only in the higher regions of truth, of faith, of reverence, and of virtue.





















