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OCCULTISM

TWO LECTURES DELIVERED IN THE ROYAL INSTITUTION ON MAY 17 and 24, 1921

BY

Edward Clodd

Reprinted, with Additions, from the "Hibbert Journal" of October, 1921, and January, 1922

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PREFATORY NOTE

My thanks are given to the Editor and the Publishers of the Hibbert Journal *for their permission to republish the articles on Occultism which were printed in that journal.*

E. C.

OCCULTISM

I

TENNYSON'S line in "Tithonus," "Immortal age beside immortal youth," is applicable to the germ-plasm whence each one of us has sprung. It is eternally young and, relatively, deathless. From that remote period in the earth's history when life emerged, this astounding complex substance has carried the material from which have arisen, in advancing succession, from monad to man, the bodies of ancestors countless generations back. And it lives on in the youngest of generations with the unimpaired power of giving origin to innumerable millions—all of them transient offshoots of the World Life-Tree. Eternally productive, it is the marvel of marvels in a universe enfolded in impenetrable mystery. It is the vehicle of mind-power whose advance runs *pari passu* with increase in complexity of brain structure.

A keynote of the doctrine of Evolution is that of continuity. So far as that doctrine has a creed, continuity is a fundamental article of it. "Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled without doubt"—scientifically—"he shall perish everlastingly." The psychical chain is unbroken. There may be leaps, but there are no gaps. The differences between the pulsations of an amœba and the ecstasies of a saint are differences of degree, not of kind. That which in the lowest life-forms is a simple mechanism is, in the

nervous system of the highest life-forms, a complex, highly specialized mechanism. Those who speak with authority are agreed that since man emerged from the proto-human stage there has, "so far as one can judge, been no far-reaching and progressive modification of instincts and emotions"; the fundamental advance being in man's acquisition of the necessary innate power of using his brain—whose cortex is composed of some nine thousand million cells[1]—to profit by experience, the accumulated products of which he has handed on to succeeding generations. This was made possible by language, "that stupendous product of the collective mind"! "I think," says Professor Elliot Smith, "it not unlikely that the acquisition of the means of communication with his fellows by vocal symbols may have been one of the essential factors in converting man's ultimate simian ancestor into a real man."[2] By instincts is meant the bundle of habits and activities common to animals of the same species which are transmitted, ready made and in complete working order, by means of the nervous apparatus inherited—great is the mystery of heredity—from their forerunners. Herbert Spencer defined instinct as "a kind of organized memory"; Samuel Butler calls it "inherited memory." However we may define them, instincts are the *prime movers* of animal activities; they supply the driving power by which those activities are sustained. They, primarily, have determined the course of human history, through the affects, or specific emotions, which they have severally aroused: hence, as will be seen, their direct bearing on my subject.

[1] Prof. J. A. Thomson, "The System of Animate Nature," vol. ii, p. 553.
[2] "Proc. Brit. Academy," vol. vii, p. 13.

The recognition of this fact has brought about a revolution in the science of psychology. The older theory over-emphasized the part played by the reason in conduct, and took too little account of the persistence of the instincts and emotions. Hence it left the greater part of conduct unexplained, taking for granted that men, in the bulk, are rational beings, and in their actions prompted accordingly. Small blame to them. For the science of comparative psychology, with its evidence that the human mind is part and parcel of the processes of evolution, is barely sixty years old. The pioneers of that science had to walk warily. On the last page of "The Origin of Species" Darwin dared no more than hint that his theory would "throw light on the origin of man and his history"; and in "The Descent of Man," published twelve years later, in 1871, he explained that his reticence was due to "a desire not to add to the prejudice" against his views. Four years after the "Origin" appeared, Huxley, greatly daring, pushed the theory of natural selection to its logical issue in his lectures on "The Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature," wherein he shocked not only the "unco guid," but some of his fellow savants, by the statement that "the attempt to draw a psychical distinction between the animal world and ourselves is futile, and that even the highest faculties of feeling and of intellect begin to germinate in lower forms of life."[1] As proof of the unpreparedness of the scientific world to welcome that brave deliverance, he told me, in a letter which is not the least of my treasures, that a very shrewd friend of his implored him not to publish the

[1] P. 109 (1863 edition).

lectures, as this would "certainly ruin all his prospects." The shrewd friend was Sir William Lawrence, whose counsel was based on personal experience. He had made an application to the Court of Chancery to protect his rights in respect of a book on "The Natural History of Man" (1819), and this Lord Eldon refused to grant, on the ground that "the book contradicted the Scriptures." What water has passed under the bridges, carrying any amount of "rubbish to the void," since those days, has further example in Sir Francis Galton's "Memories." He says that when he was at Cambridge "the best-informed men believed that the whole history of the early world was contained in the Pentateuch" (p. 66). So it has come to be: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." We have proof, heaped like Ossa on Pelion, that man is no exception among living things, and the new psychology, like Wisdom, "is justified of her children." Surveying the whole field of mental life, with all the non-rational and unconscious processes which it covers, the fact stands out clear that the power of conscious reasoning is a later development in psychical evolution. It plays a secondary part in the most highly advanced man. He, no less than the savage, is a creature of impulses; for the emotional from its very nature is impulsive. On the whole, he "is a passionate and credulous creature, the slave of his instincts and of the suggestions arising from them, or from the most dubious external sources which may simulate authority"[1] and prefer bogus claims. In his suggestive book on "Social Psychology," Dr. M'Dougall says: "The truth is that men are moved by

[1] A. G. Tansley, "The New Psychology," pp. 14 and 158.

a variety of impulses whose nature has been determined through long ages of the evolutionary process without reference to the life of men in civilized societies." And he adds that "mankind is only but a little bit reasonable, and to a great extent very unintelligently moved in quite unreasonable ways" (p. 11). In one of his last letters Herbert Spencer says: "In my earlier days I continually made the foolish supposition that conclusive proof would change belief, but experience has long since dissipated my faith in man's rationality."[1] The philosopher is backed by the divine. In his "Outspoken Essays," Dean Inge caustically puts it thus: "All we have a right to say is that individuals are occasionally guided by reason; crowds never" (p. 9). Primitive sympathy, begotten of the herd instinct, and the power of suggestiveness, combine to effect this; and the contention which will run through this discourse is that the believers in Occultism do not act as reasoning beings. To that extent they must be classed among the mentally defective. These facts give pause to think whether the arrogant, self-vaunting term *Homo sapiens* (wise) should not be replaced by the more applicable *Homo insipiens* (foolish). As bearing on this matter, let us take a couple of familiar examples of common incapacity to judge of the value of evidence in the simplest matters, and of the power of credulity. The first, which will occur to most of us, was the credence given to a rumour that on a night in September, 1914, thousands of Russian soldiers had crossed England *en route* to the Western front. The story was not inherently improbable, and it was not in the interest of the War Office to contradict it; but the

[1] "Times," September 3, 1904.

imaginary details which buttressed it betrayed the power of crowd credulity. The delusion was endemic. Nearly every one whom you met assured you that he or she had seen the train which conveyed the troops, or that they knew somebody who had. Perhaps "the limit" was reached in the story told by Dr. Culpin in his "Spiritualism and the New Psychology," that one of his friends, a man eminent in a profession which demands clear thinking, assured him that his own brother-in-law was responsible for the arrangement for the railway transport of the troops (p. 57)!

My second example is supplied by the legend of the angel-bowmen at Mons, who, led by St. George, aided the retreat of our troops. In acceptance of this by a number of presumably intelligent persons credulity reached its nadir. What is the fact? On September 29, 1914, Mr. Arthur Machen published in the "Evening News" an imaginary story of help rendered to soldiers by spirits. To quote his own words, the fiction was speedily converted into "a monstrous mass of legend" and widely accepted as an actual occurrence. He accounted for this conversion of vague rumours into facts as due to so prevalent a materialistic view of things ruling at the time that people were prepared "to believe anything—save the truth" ("John o' London's Weekly," April 12, 1919, p. 4). Anyway, the story gathered, fungus-like, a mass of testimony of a sort. It was affirmed that dead Prussians had been found on the battlefield with arrow wounds in their bodies. But the arrows were not producible. A wounded lance-corporal asserted that he and his comrades had seen strange lights and outstretched wings during the retreat. A private named Cleaver, of the 1st Cheshire Regiment,

swore to a written statement made before Mr. Hazelhurst, a J.P. at Birkenhead, that he was "personally at Mons and saw the visions of angels with his own eyes."

"Truth will out sometimes, even in an affidavit," said a brilliant judge—I think the late Lord Bowen. But in the case of Private Cleaver's sworn statement, which purported to contain "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," there was a flaw. The regimental records show that he was in England at the time!

The myth became a welcome text for sermons. "I am certain," said the Rev. Samuel Chadwick, President of the Wesleyan Conference, "that angels were at Mons, that there were unseen mighty forces that saved our men."

It is a matter for regret that this supernatural help was only spasmodic; had it been rendered more continuously, thousands of lives would have been saved and a terrible war shortened.

As for St. George, the Arabs have a tradition that after his death he became a Moslem (they say the same of Jesus and his Mother), and that he led his hosts to wholesale slaughter of the infidel Nasrânies, as they call the Christians.[1] Folk-lore and history supply numerous parallel legends of angelic intervention on the battlefield. Quoting some of these, Gibbon, with his mixture of insight and irony, says that "the astonished fancy of the multitude has sometimes given shape and colour, language and motion, to the fleeting but uncommon meteors of the air."[2] Truly, given the predisposition, fog, mirage, and cloud-processions

[1] C. M. Doughty, "Travels in Arabia Deserta," vol. i, p. 474 (1921 reprint).

[2] "Decline and Fall," chap. xx.

become causes of optical illusions interpreted as celestial visions. In the recent Great War our more sceptical generals followed the example of Theodosius. "As the angels who protected the Catholic cause were visible only to the eyes of faith, he prudently reinforced those heavenly legions with the more effectual aid of temporal and carnal weapons."[1]

It is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The human nervous system is built on the same lines; and the more unstable that system, the lower is the mentality and the more are men the trembling, affrighted slaves of a heap of superstitions—offspring of fear in the presence of the unknown and the unusual. For, hide it as we may from ourselves, there is a mass of quickly aroused fear in all of us—a heritage from a long animal and human past; potent alike for good and evil. Then, too, there is that power of suggestion whose influence upon the crowd is abiding and dominant. Expectancy prepares it to see and believe what it is told. Is not the lesson therefrom that the art of life consists in that control of the emotions, and that diversion of them into wholesome channels, which reason, equipped with the latest knowledge and unfettered in the application of it, can alone effect?

It is because the emotions are allowed dominant play that the majority of people travel by preference along the lines of least resistance, sheep-like, in "follow-my-leader" fashion. They are the human caterpillars to whom the behaviour of the caterpillars of the Pine Processionary moths supplies analogy. These tiny creatures sally forth from their nests in the tree-tops

[1] Ibid., chap. xxvii.

in search of their food in single file. The leader emits, spider-like, an almost invisible thread on which the next caterpillar crawls, doubling it by a like emission, the process being continued by all the others till there is formed a narrow ribbon of dazzling whiteness, forming an unbroken link between the crawling chain. That wonderful entomologist, the late Henri Fabre, speculating on what might happen if the chain was broken, had his chance when a procession of these caterpillars, each member touching the stern of the one in front of him, climbed up a big palm-pot and marched round the rim. As soon as it had closed up Fabre broke the string of it, and thereby also the clue by which the caterpillars could find the way back to their nest. For nearly a week the bewildered hungry creatures crawled round the rim, stopping only to rest at night; not one had the intelligence to leave the track, although their food, scented pine-needles, was only a few inches away.

The parable should come home. Mimics and conservatives as we are at heart, one of the greatest pains to human nature is that "of a new idea,"[1] and they are wise who keep their minds receptive to the end, thus escaping mental ossification. Vested interest and apathy are kin foes to advancement; so dominant is the power of feeling over reason, of the wish to believe which calls for no effort, as opposed to the desire after knowledge, which can be satisfied only by strenuous effort. Sir Leslie Stephen says that "mankind resent nothing so much as the intrusion upon them of a new and disturbing truth.....progress is the rare exception." And he

[1] Bagehot, "Physics and Politics," p. 163.

adds that "it is a plausible, but wholly false, presumption that mankind in general act on rational principles."[1] Three hundred years ago Hobbes wrote in the same key: "The most part of men, though they have the use of reasoning a little way, yet it serves them to little use in common life";[2] and, more than two thousand years before him, Thucydides thus rebuked the apathy of his time: "So little pains will most men take in search for truth; so much more readily they turn to what comes first."[3] This operates most forcibly in all matters of belief whose foundations are emotional and therefore unstable. Social in their origin, religions are necessarily conservative, because in revolt therefrom the communal bond is weakened; the tribal gods are angered; the tithes of the priests are imperilled, and punishment awaits the daring challenger of established creeds and customs. He is the "eccentric," who has put himself *outside the circle* wherein the majority, the easy-going "half-believers of our casual creeds, who never deeply felt nor clearly willed," are content to abide.

Thus much by way of warrantable preamble. For it is in the persistent rule of the emotions, and in the unchecked play of non-rational activities, that we find the key to the origin of all the manifold beliefs and practices among barbaric and civilized races which are grouped under the name Occultism. That word is of modern coinage. Like its cognate forms, it is derived from the Latin *occulo*, "to cover over" or "hide," and its appropriateness lies in the fact that nearly all the phenomena of Spiritualism take place in the dark or in

[1] "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," vol. i, p. 17.
[2] "Leviathan," pt. i, ch. v. [3] Bk. i, p. 20.

a dim red-shaded light. The ingenious explanation of this—which satisfies the credulous—is that the delicately materialized forms of the spirits would be destroyed by the action of unrefracted light rays, strong sunlight being destructive to both animal and vegetable protoplasm. There is an ancient text that "men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil"; and my sympathy is with Dowlas the farrier in "Silas Marner": "If ghos's want me to believe in 'em, let 'em leave off skulking i' the dark and i' lone places—let 'em come where's company and candles." But if Occultism is a new word, it is, in the ideas which it expresses and in the history which it embraces, "as old as the hills." It is an outcome of a widespread belief of the lower races in the operation of an impersonal, ceaselessly acting, universally diffused power which, borrowing the word common to the whole Pacific, is called *Mana*. It is by this power that wizards, diviners, medicine-men, and mediums, all the world over, perform their tricks; it is the very stuff of which the vast company of spiritual beings—souls, ghosts, demons, angels good and bad, godlings and gods—are made. It remains a fundamental element in the higher thought—in mysticism, metaphysics, and transcendental philosophies, linking the lower and the higher speculations; thus evidencing that we have more in common with the barbaric mind than we know, or are willing to admit.

> All thoughts that mould the age begin
> Deep down within the primitive soul,
> And from the many slowly upward win
> To one who grasps the whole.

What is Herbert Spencer's "Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed"; what is Dean Inge's ever-operating "Soul of the World," but *Mana*?

The non-living and the living being alike credited with *Mana*, there follows the tendency of the primitive mind to project its own personality on the forces of nature. Hence the origin of Animism, or belief in indwelling spirits everywhere. "There is," says Hume in his "Natural History of Religion," "an universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted and of which they are intimately conscious" (Section 3). Anthropological study and research have proved the existence of this "universal tendency." And it is on this animistic foundation that savage, classical, medieval, and modern Spiritualism alike rest. Dreams, to the savage, are real events; they exercise influence on the timid and semi-civilized; and there can be no question that they are the most important factors in creating belief in disembodied or quasi-bodied intelligences among all races, whether savage or civilized. These factors are supplemented by such phenomena as shadows, reflections, echoes, and abnormal states due to disease, or to the illusions brought about by stuffing or starving. Even those of us who know their phantom nature may well pause before the phenomena of dual personalities with whom in our dreams we hold debate, while we supply the arguments for both sides, the individual self being at once victor and defeated.

Occultism may be classified as *lower*, *medial*, and *higher*, each blending inseparably with the other, like the colours of the rainbow. The *lower* Occultism embraces savage and modern Spiritualism. The Society for Psychical Research has recently planted an offshoot in Glasgow, but it has not yet established branches

among the lower races. Surely it is a great oversight to neglect a field whose first-fruits already furnish proofs that, whether the spirits play their pranks in Central Australia, Polynesia, Boston, or Bond Street, the same features occur. The apparatus of the Siberian shaman, that of the Maori medicine-man, and that of the London medium are the same. Raps, taps, and spirit-voices are parts of the contents of the conjurer's "bag o' tricks." "Suppose," says Sir E. B. Tylor, in his classic "Primitive Culture," "a wild North-American Indian present at a séance in London. As to the presence of disembodied spirits, manifesting themselves by raps, noises, voices, and other physical actions, he would be perfectly at home in the proceedings, because these are part and parcel of his recognized system of nature."[1] The parts of the affair really strange to him would be such things as automatic writing and the aluminium trumpet, by means of which Mrs. Wriedt and other "direct-voice mediums," as they call themselves, converse with the spirits, no "control" intervening. Taking a few examples, one akin to table-turning is supplied by the Tibetans. They believe that the Lama can find stolen objects by following a table which flies before him. A Russian merchant who had lost some goods complained to the chief Lama, who ordered one of his subordinates to take a four-footed bench which, after being turned by him in several directions, pointed to the tent where the goods were hidden. The priest then mounted astride the bench, and it carried him to the tent, where the stolen things were discovered. The men of the Leper Islands in Melanesia build a little house in

[1] Vol. i, p. 155.

the forest. A low partition divides it, and a bamboo is put within, half being placed on one side of the partition and half on the other side. They assemble at night to try the presence of a ghost, and sit on one side only of the partition with their hands under one end of the bamboo ; they shut their eyes and call the names of the recently dead. When they feel the bamboo moving in their hands they know that the ghost whose name was the last called is present. Then, naming one of themselves, they ask, "Where is Tanga?" and the bamboo rises in their hands, strikes the named, and then sinks back. Thus made sure of the presence of the ghost, they leave the hut, holding one end of the bamboo in their hands, singing as they go, and the bamboo leads them as the ghost within it chooses. In the same way, a club is put at night into the sacred cycas-tree, and when the name of some ghost is called it moves of itself and will lift and drag people about.[1]

New Zealand supplies matter for comparison with home products. A brave young chief had died in battle, and his friends asked the Tolunga, or medium, to bring him back. He had kept a diary of his achievements which was missing. At the séance, at which an Englishman, who tells the story, was present, the medium chose the darkest corner. The fire burned down to a red glow. Suddenly the spirit spoke, "Salvation to my tribe," and the dead man's sister, a beautiful Maori girl, rushing into the darkness to clasp him, was seized and held by her affrighted friends. Then came a voice, "a strange melancholy sound, like that of wind blowing through a hollow vessel." It said, "It is well

[1] "The Melanesians," pp. 223-4, Bishop Codrington.

with me, my place is a good place," and the visitor admits that he "felt a strange swelling of the chest." But when the voice spoke again, and said, "Give my large pig to the priest," he says that he was disenchanted. (It is the badge of all the sacerdotal tribe. Among the Samoans the priest generally managed to make the departed say what he wished him to say, or to make demands for something which the priest himself coveted.) To return to the Maori story. The Englishman then asked the spirit, "Where have you hidden the book?" Quick came the answer, "Between the Tahutur of my house and the thatch, straight over you as you go into the door." The spirit's brother rushed out and came back with the book in his hand. Then there was heard a voice from the deep beneath the ground, "Farewell." Then from the high air, "Farewell." The deception was perfect. "A ventriloquist, or perhaps the devil," says the narrator.[1]

That intrepid explorer, the late Miss Czaplicka, whose early death all who knew her deeply deplore, during her travels in Siberia secured admission to a shamanistic séance, the proceedings at which she described to me as follows:—The shaman sat near a low fire in the tent, the sitters being ranged round him. All were forbidden to touch him or to move, lest the spirits should be disturbed. Where there is a shaman there is always a drum; that and the rattle are indispensable to the magician in the business of savage spiritualism everywhere. The shaman beats the drum gently at the start; then, by degrees, more loudly. The drumming is called "the language of the spirits," whereby they are summoned. It corre-

[1] "Old New Zealand," chap. x (1863).

sponds to the ceremony prefacing performances at our séances, which are usually opened with prayer and singing of hymns. The shaman accompanies the drum-beating with chants, sometimes with imitations of voices of men and animals and of winds and echoes, for he is a skilful ventriloquist. He sings and dances till the drum is no longer beaten, and the fire is put out. Gentle raps or taps of the spirit are heard; the shaman makes a rushing noise as if escaping from the tent. After an interval of a quarter of an hour or more he bumps on the ground to make known his return from the spirit-world. Sometimes he affects exhaustion and waits awhile before telling the sitters what messages he has brought from the spirits.[1]

As to the trance or hypnotic state, the savage has nothing to learn from our mediums. Among the Dene Hareskins tribe of North America the medicine-man starts business by a three days' fast, and then retires to a "magic lodge" in the forest. Here he falls into what is called "the sleep of the shadow"; then the patient comes to him; he sings and plays the tambour, thereby exorcizing the disease-demon, whom he bids quit the patient. Among the Baganda of Uganda the woman-medium is put under restrictions as severe as those which hampered the Roman Flamen Dialis, chief of the priesthood consecrated to the service of Jupiter, while, in the discharge of her functions, she recalls the priestess of Apollo at Delphi. "She first smoked a pipe of tobacco till the god came upon her; she then began speaking in a shrill voice; then sat over a sacred fire when giving the oracle, perspired very freely, and

[1] See also article on "Ostyaks," by M. A. Czaplicka, Hastings' "Ency. Rel. and Ethics," vol. ix.

foamed at the mouth. After the oracle had been delivered and the god had left her, she was very fatigued and lay prostrated for a time."[1]

As remarked, the value of these examples from savage Spiritualism is in their identity in character with those supplied in the performances of modern mediums at home. Did space permit, reference to cases supplied by ancient Spiritualism would add confirming witness. The Delphic Pythia survives in the trance medium; the spirit-writing trick through closed slates is eighteen hundred years old, as proven in Lucian's story of the "arch-scoundrel" Alexander of Aboniteichos, who pretended to secure answers from the gods to all who brought him sealed packets containing the questions.[2] In one form or another, these things repeat themselves; the conjurer, priest, or medium uses the same thaumaturgy, and the unreasoning onlookers see in this a proof of the supernormal or the supernatural.

Turning to modern variants, we are all so fed-up with materials, with details as like unto one another as peas in a pod, that only a brace of the most recent examples need be considered; the one being further purported communications from departed spirits, and the other supplying so-called evidence as to "a form of matter unknown to science." Rigid space-limits compel brevity; certainly, avoidance of the example set by the humour-lacking scholiast who wrote a preface to an epigram and made an index to a sonnet.

The first example is supplied by so-called spirit messages, to the "very remarkable nature" of which the late Lord Northcliffe bore testimony. These have filled

[1] Rev. J. Roscoe, "The Baganda," p. 298.
[2] "The Works of Lucian," vol. ii, pp. 212 ff. (Fowler's translation).

for more than a year many columns of one of his Lordship's papers, the "Weekly Dispatch."[1] They purport to have been received by the Rev. Vale Owen from his departed mother through the usual and, as it seems to the critically minded, superfluous, channel of a go-between second personality named the "control." Occasionally they come direct from the mother. The earlier messages, which have been issued in book-form under the title of "The Life Beyond the Veil," had their origin, the reverend recipient tells us, in the urgings of his wife, "who had herself developed the power of automatic writing."[2] So he decided to take down any thoughts "which seemed to come into his mind, projected there by some external personality, and not consequent on the exercise of his own mentality."[3] "Very doubtfully," he decided to sit in his vestry after Evensong, wearing his cassock—this apparently as a necessary equipment for receipt of the messages, which at first "wandered aimlessly," but soon took "consecutive form" and sped at "an average rate of twenty-four words a minute." The vehicle of transmission, we are told, is "a celestial-mundane telephonic current,"[4] the messages being heard interiorly in much the same manner as one is "able to hum over a well-remembered tune." The spiritual element in them uplifts the receiver "to the boundaries and, on occasion, into the very domain of ecstasy."[5] Mrs. Vale Owen, who died in 1909, "had not during her life shown any interest in

[1] This newspaper announced that its Sunday issue of August 7, 1920, would contain an article by the Rev. Vale Owen on St. Paul's knowledge of "psychic science" and the reception of the Ten Commandments "through automatic writing."

[2] P. xx. [3] P. xx. [4] P. xxviii. [5] P. xxviii.

the question of spirit communication." The "celestial-mundane telephonic current" started working in 1913, and since then has been the vehicle of messages "in a swift and steady stream," which shows no signs of exhaustion. Nor is there any reason why it should if, as has been humorously suggested, the source is not Beyond the Veil, but "Within the Vale." They are of the nature to be expected from a man of highly strung temperament, victim of a severe nervous breakdown, who is given to preaching rhetorical sermons, and who, by the exercise of auto-suggestion, has worked himself into the conviction that he has revelations from a spirit-world. They supplement, and, in the omission of repellent detail, compare favourably with, the nauseous particulars supplied in "Raymond" about that invisible realm, such as the supply of unsmokable cigars and of undrinkable whiskies there, and the import of decayed worsted from the earth, whereof to make the white robes of the spirits. In the account of the so-called Celestial Lowlands on which, pending advancement to the plane of the Highlands, Mr. Vale Owen's communicators tarry, we learn that the occupants include "ministers of different grades downwards who may scarcely be termed persons." Among these are "fairies, pixies, and elementals generally.....water-nymphs, and such-like beings."[1] The manufacture of harps and the building of houses, which, according to "Raymond," are made of emanations from the earth, go on apace. The harps are for use in colleges "devoted to the study of the best methods of conveying musical inspiration" —ecclesiastical music being a special study; and "the

[1] P. 171.

building and ordering of houses are for those who are still on earth." So there is no housing problem in the Celestial Lowlands. Mr. Engholm, the editor of the volume, claims that "it supplies the most complete and most detailed statement of conditions in the after-life yet published." Sir Conan Doyle, who, in the words of a "Times" reviewer, "reveals an extraordinary inability to grasp the principles of scientific investigation," out-Herods Herod in the rhapsody which he contributes to it. Tyrtæus-like, he sings of the victory —of a "long battle nearly won. Verily, the hand of the Lord is here."[1] He knew not what further cause of joy awaited him in further proof of that divine intervention. This was supplied in the photographing of fairies. In May last year he received a letter from a lady "well known in several departments of human thought" (so he describes her), informing him that two photographs of fairies had been taken in a village in Yorkshire, "under circumstances which seemed to put fraud out of the question." "Being," he tells us, "by nature of a somewhat sceptical turn" (we live and learn; some of us think that "Credulity" and "Conan Doyle" are equations), he felt that, "complete and detailed as was the evidence," something closer was needed to assure personal conviction. The seed fell into receptive soil, since he tells us that he "happened at the moment to be collecting material for an article on fairies, now completed,[2] and had accumulated a surprising number of cases of people who claimed to be able to see these little creatures." Patient inquiry at last brought him into contact with a member of the Executive Committee of

[1] P. xxxiii.
[2] "The Coming of the Fairies" (1922).

the Theosophical Society and a well-known lecturer on occult subjects, who was, shall we say, providentially, in possession of the actual negatives.[1] Some good prints and lantern slides were prepared from these, and, after studying the photographs "long and earnestly with a high-power lens," Sir Conan saw that for which he looked. Again the sober researcher sinks into the rhapsodist. He is carried into "a third heaven." Unlike the Apostle Paul, who "heard unspeakable words not lawful for a man to utter," he breaks into windy bombast. Here is a sample of it: "When Columbus knelt in prayer upon the edge of America, what prophetic eye saw all that a new continent might do to affect the destinies of the world? We also seem to be on the edge of a new continent, separated, not by oceans, but by subtle and surmountable psychic conditions. I look at the prospect with awe. May those little creatures suffer from the contact, and some Las Casas bewail their ruin? If so, it would be an evil day when the world defined their existence. But there is a guiding hand in the affairs of man, and we can but trust and follow." "Cameras will be forthcoming. Other well-authenticated cases will come along."[2] Enough of this. Of course, the photographs are genuine, and they make a very pretty picture. The fairies have been copied from some illustrated book, cleverly cut out of thin cardboard, stuck in front of a little girl, and then photographed with her. They are clearly of two dimensions only, having length and breadth, but no thickness. Two collaborators—minxes shall we call them?—Alice and Iris Carpenter—have "deceived the very elect." More power

[1] "Strand Magazine," December, 1920, p. 463. [2] Ibid., p. 468.

to their scissors ! we say. Another "well-authenticated case" supplies evidence of a sort neither expected nor desired by Sir Conan. The "Daily News" of April 28, 1921, published copies of photographs of fairies. The "little folk" were cut out of pasteboard by Miss E. R. North, of St. Andrews, and arranged in groups amidst moorland scenery, with results as picturesque as those presented by the Misses "Carpenter." The "Times" of March 3, 1921, reported an exhibition of the "Carpenter" photographs in the hall of the Theosophical Society, Brompton Road, on the preceding evening. Mr. E. L. Gardner, "a firm believer in the genuineness of the photographs," rebuked a doubter by explaining that fairies are perceptible only "to people with clairvoyant sight. They can be photographed only if they become, with clairvoyant aid, partially materialized. The matter composing a fairy's body is plastic to thought. Currents of human thought give fairies the form in which they are seen by the clairvoyant." The average person will find it difficult to extract any sane meaning from this balderdash—composite of wind and fog.

How Spiritualism belies its usurped name, and is materialistic at the core, has further example in séances held in Belfast and Paris, at which the phenomena are purported exudations from the bodies of the mediums, which, it is contended, give evidence of a hitherto unknown form of matter having a spiritistic significance. Here we are plunged in Acheronian swamps over which hang mephitic gases poisoning the soul. At the séances in Belfast, which, like all kindred gatherings, are opened and closed with hymns and prayers, lulling the company into Dreamland, the medium, Miss Kathleen Goligher, sits on a chair placed on a weighing machine. The

"intelligent control," as the spirit assumed to be present is named, is asked to take out matter from the medium's body to be used as a cantilever whereby she can lift a table within reach weighing about ten pounds (the maximum weight of another table is sixteen), with which, apparently, she is not in contact. The control gives raps, and the weight of the medium lessens in proportion to their number, sometimes decreasing nearly half a hundredweight. Ultimately, these spiritual cantilevers or psychic rapping rods, as they are named, return to the body of the medium. During the performance the room, under the usual conditions, is dimly lighted; no one is allowed to pass between the medium and the table, because it is said that serious bodily harm would thereby occur to her. Doubtless, a damaged reputation might also result. Photographic proof of the reality of the "psychic stuff" is claimed to be supplied by a smear on the negative; but a sceptical eye sees in the smear the mark of a stockinged great toe. The suspicion of trickery that invests the whole business is strengthened by Miss Goligher's refusal of an invitation from the Society for Psychical Research to come to London[1] and submit her psychic stuff (which Dr. Crawford avers to having seen and felt) to examination by a mixed body of scientists and conjurers, since this is just the sort of test case which can be dealt with on purely scientific methods. So it must here suffice to say that Mr. William Marriott, the most experienced exposer of mediums in this country, told Dr. Ivor Tuckett that he could make his weight increase and decrease, and a table rise in the air, under conditions identical with those of the Goligher

[1] Dr. Schiller is my informant.

circle. The reports are based on investigations carried on for the most part solely by the above-named Dr. Crawford, a mechanical engineer (he committed suicide in August, 1920); and his theory of psychic force exercised by "invisible operators" as the cause of the levitation of the table has the support of Sir William Barrett, who is satisfied that there is "an unseen intelligence behind these manifestations" ("Threshold of the Unseen," p. 49). Those who have read Dr. Crawford's book on "The Reality of Psychic Phenomena" should follow that by studying as an antiseptic Surgeon Rear-Admiral Beadnell's critical booklet thereon.[1] A high authority, Sir Bryan Donkin, says that it is a "superabundant exposure of the massive credulity and of the total defect of logical power displayed by Dr. Crawford." Detailed accounts of similar performances at Paris fill a ponderous volume entitled "Phenomena of Materialization: A Contribution to the Investigation of Mediumistic Teleplastics." (By Baron von Schrenck-Notzing; translated by Dr. E. E. Fournier d'Albe.) Numerous photographs therein show a flow of muslin-like exudations—teleplasma, ectoplasm, dynamo-psychic, are among the names given them—from the mouth and other parts of the body of the medium, one Martha Beraud, known as "Eva Carrière." Sir Bryan Donkin tells me that she believes herself to be an incarnation of Thais, a celebrated Greek courtesan—anyway, her record is shady; she was suspected, but escaped conviction, of cheating at séances held in Algiers by the credulous Professor Richet some ten years ago. The matter said to be detachable from and

[1] "The Reality or Unreality of Spiritualistic Phenomena" (Watts).

returnable to her assumes fantastic shapes of hands, faces, and vaguely complete bodies.

Narrating his experiences at one of the séances, Sir Conan Doyle says: "I was allowed to look through [a slit in the cabinet], and I saw this stuff as it comes from such a medium—a long, white, stringy substance, hanging from her clothes. I put my hand through the slit and touched it. To my horror, it writhed like a worm. Looking at it clearly, I saw it was not an obvious animal, but it had the element of life in it. Wonderful stuff! For some centuries, I prophesy, it will occupy the very best of human brains to devise its power and meaning." It has given birth to "a new science," which he calls "plasmology."

Under the title "Hymns and Humbugs," Mr. Filson Young contributed an article to the "Saturday Review," January 21, 1922, reporting his experiences at a séance to which Sir Conan Doyle invited him. On their arrival at the house Sir Conan and his wife whetted their guest's appetite by telling him that a "wonderful afternoon" awaited them, the room being "simply saturated with Mrs. Johnson's (the medium) ectoplasm." However, despite the offering of the Lord's Prayer, and other attempts to quicken the proceedings, nothing happened, whereupon Sir Conan "struck-up 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,'" at the end of which he said: "I am fairly bursting with ectoplasm. I can feel the power running about all over me." Probably, like the sweating revivalist preacher, he mistook perspiration for inspiration. The heading to his article indicates what was Mr. Filson Young's verdict on the matter.

Sir Conan believes that all of us have the power to exude ectoplasm in different degrees. It will be well, I

think, to limit the exercise of it to Kate Goligher and "Eva C.," otherwise life might have some unpleasant incidents. Some small bits of the stuff were secured by an enthusiastic believer, Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing, and, under the microscope, turned out to be fragments of skin. The evidence, based chiefly on the photographs, is supplied from one source, a woman confederate of "Eva C." Only one discordant note is struck throughout. A Dr. Specht, who expressed his belief that the phenomena are due to trickery, was not invited to attend further séances.

If I agree with him, and find explanation in the cleverness of the medium and the incapacity of the witnesses to give valid judgment, it may be asked, How does she befool them? I reply in the words of one at the mention of whose name in this place we bow in reverence. In a lecture on "Mental Education," delivered in this Institution in 1854, Michael Faraday said: "I am not bound to explain how a table tilts, any more than to indicate how, under the conjurer's hands, a pudding appears in a hat. The means are not known to me. But I am persuaded that the results, however strange they may appear, are in accordance with that which is truly known, and, if carefully investigated, would justify the well-tried laws of Nature."[1] The *onus probandi* lies on the assertors. At present it is *dictum de dicto*—mere report upon hearsay. Let them bring the evidence into court, to be dealt with by scientific methods.

Since the delivery of this Lecture there has been some recognition of the necessity of adopting such

[1] "Science and Education," p. 61 (reprint of R.I. Lectures, 1854), 1917.

methods. Shortly after Dr. Crawford's suicide the friend who had financed the Goligher business expressed his wish to continue the investigation. The result was the appointment of Dr. Fournier d'Albe, a choice acceptable to the believers, in view of his acceptance of the performances of Eva Carrière as genuine. Between May and August, 1921, he held twenty sittings with Kathleen Goligher and her near relatives. He applied a number of searching tests, the conditions attaching to which he found were evaded or refused. He caught Kathleen in the act of raising the table with her foot; when her feet were securely tied the raps ceased; the "shadowgraphs" of the "ectoplasm" which he took showed that the stuff was some gossamer-like, viscous material. In short, he was satisfied that the Goligher Circle are astute humbugs. Summing up the matter in his report ("The Goligher Circle"; published by J. M. Watkins), he says "the only result was the indication of trickery."

The sequel is charged with peculiar interest. In a complaint against the tone of my review of "Phenomena of Materialization" in "Nature" of November 18, 1920, which Dr. Fournier d'Albe made in a letter to that journal (December 9, 1920), he emphasized his belief that in ectoplasm "we are face to face with a new set of biological phenomena exhibiting the known powers of the human organism in an intensified and much accelerated form."

The Doctor is "hoist with his own petard." Under the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research, there were held, between April and June, 1920, forty sittings with Eva Carrière and her confederate, Madame Bisson. The usual stage "properties" were brought into play—

the screened lamps, the black curtained cabinet, etc.; and the result was to convince the investigating Committee—a body of sympathetic observers—that what Dr. Fournier d'Albe said about Kathleen Goligher is applicable to Eva Carrière.

There is more to come. In a letter to the "Times," August 21, 1922, Sir Bryan Donkin quotes the following from a report published in "L'Opinion" of July 8, 1922. Four French physico-psychologists attended fifteen sittings between last March 20 and June 23, to investigate the phenomenon of Eva Carrière's "ectoplasm." They agreed that the existence of that stuff, "which would be inexplicable by any known physiological process," had not been proved. The results arrived at "must be regarded as wholly negative." But "we have scotch'd the snake, not killed it." Sir Conan Doyle still believes that he can exude; and Mr. Beresford, a novelist, in reviewing "The Goligher Circle," is not convinced. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him" (Proverbs xxvii, 22).

It is matter for comment that, with the rare exception of the late Dr. Russel Wallace, the few prominent men of science who are Spiritualists are physicists, not biologists. Given a bias in favour of the occult, the physicist is specially incompetent to weigh the evidence assumed to support it. He ceases, *ad hoc*, to be a reasoning being. The explanation is at hand. His own field of research is one of exact, concrete, and unvarying relation. Study of the complex, mobile living thing lies outside his province; "his familiarity with the transmission of waves of energy in dead

material and through space leads him to concepts which cannot justly be applied to living beings."[1] *Per contra*, the physiologist is ever confronted by the vagaries of that inscrutable marvel, the human mind. Something to check cocksureness is always manifesting itself in the delicately-poised organism with which he has to deal. The Spiritualists complain that biologists refuse to investigate the phenomena which they condemn. As the larger portion of these are of an experiential nature, the evidence being of things said to have been seen and heard, no physical tests to confirm or disprove them can be applied. And, where experimental tests are possible, investigation has been refused, or conditions have been imposed which would reduce the examination to a farce.

Despite the fact admitted by Mr. Hereward Carrington, a reluctant defender of the faith as it is in Spiritualism, that the proportion of fraudulent phenomena is ninety-eight per cent., the remaining two per cent. being provisionally admitted genuine in the sense that they have so far eluded explanation, the delusion is rampant to-day. Nor is the reason far to seek. We are in a world of unrest; of times of strain and stress, when emotions are at high temperature. Millions of bereaved folk, victims of an accursed war, are coveting assurance of reunion with the loved and lost. The momentous question put by Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?", trembles on their lips, and they crave for an affirmative answer. This is given them by Spiritualism with a definiteness and concreteness which is lacking in that given by the Churches; hence its ready acceptance.

[1] See Professor Leonard Hill's Introduction to Dr. Culpin's "Spiritualism and the New Psychology," p. xvi.

Eager to know, the sorrowing echo the yearning voiced in "Maud":—

> Ah, Christ, that it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell
> Us what and where they be.

And the mediums say, "It *is* possible."

Besides the unhesitating answer to Job's question, the highly-strung sorrowing ones are urged to find proof of it by resort to a medium who, the fee being duly paid, will give them the hungered-for evidence, ocular and aural. Not tactile, because we are told that the etherealized departed cannot be subjected to mortal embrace. On the rare occasions when sceptic hands have sought to touch them, they have left fragments of muslin, or some like diaphanous stuff, with smell of phosphorus, behind them.

The tenacious hold of Spiritualism on the many is largely due to the fact that from the time of its revival in America in 1848 it has been a mixture of raps and religion—in the case of some of its leaders with a dash of idealism blended with unlovely material conceptions. Devotional services preface séances, where the popular hymnologist is one Emma R. Tuttle. A verse from her "Spiritual Songster" will suffice as sample of the doggerel which fills the hymn-book:—

> Rap, rap, rap. Rap, rap, rap.
> Loved ones are rapping to-night.
> Heaven seems not far away.....
> Magical changes these rappings have wrought,
> Sweet hope to the hopeless their patter has brought.

It is not easy, when writing on Spiritualism, to avoid converting comment into acrimony. There is nothing

to be urged in its favour; there is every warrant to condemn it. It would import chaos into an unbroken order, and contradict all verifiable human experience; it has communicated nothing new or ennobling in the myriad messages purporting to come from the "Beyond"—on the contrary, only what is commonplace or drivel; it has raised hopes in multitudes of bereaved folk whose disillusioning will bring mischievous reaction; while in all the lower phenomena manifest at séances the conjurer goes one better in showing how the trick is done.

Ecrasez l'infâme.

In the audacious words of Sir Conan Doyle, Spiritualism is "a new Revelation of God's dealings with man." It is not an addition to, so much as a supersession of, the Old Revelation. It has been humorously said that when a man gives up belief in God he takes to believing in ghosts, and Sir Conan is one among a large number of converts to Spiritualism who have abandoned Orthodoxy—now a term of varying meaning. For the title-deeds of the Old Revelation are found to be more or less invalid; flaws have been discovered in them, with the inevitable result that defenders of what is left of "the faith once delivered to the saints" are in doubt as to how much of this residue can be retained. They will welcome the ingenious suggestion of Bishop Joseph Hall, of the Commonwealth period, when all the divines were at loggerheads over creeds and catechisms, that the most useful of all books of theology would be one with the title *De paucitate credendorum*—that is, of the fewness of the things that a man should believe. But some limit must be imposed. In his essay on "Turgot," Viscount Morley, speaking of an ambitious

profligate prelate, Loménie de Brienne, says that, having espoused that richly dowered bride, the Church, he rose to be Archbishop of Toulouse, and would have risen to be Archbishop of Paris but for the King's "over-scrupulous conviction that an Archbishop of Paris must at least believe in God."[1]

The reluctance of our liberal theologians to face logical issues is helped by a defective sense of lucidity; as Erasmus said of the clerics of his day, "they strike the fire of subtlety from the flint of obscurity."[2] But if the creeds are cracking, this is not so much by onslaughts from without as by blows from within, dealt by ecclesiastics in high places: men of the courageous type of Dean Inge, Dean Rashdall, and Canon Barnes, whose praiseworthy aim is to maintain a venerable fabric by measures of reconstruction. Their action recalls a story told in Southey's entertaining miscellany, "The Doctor." One Joseph Cook, of Cirencester, a house-painter, had done some decorative repairs in the church in Siddington, an adjoining parish. His bill ran thus: "To mending the Commandments, altering the Belief, and making a new Lord's Prayer—21s." (p. 407, 1848 edition).

But perchance, ere long, differences may be readjusted or wholly disappear. Not many months have passed since there came from America, birthplace of the reborn Spiritualism and land of "many inventions," this message from its champion inventor, Mr. Edison. He says: "I have been at work for some time building an apparatus to see if it is possible for persons who have left the earth to communicate with us. If those who have left the form of life we have on earth cannot use or

[1] "Miscellanies," vol. ii, p. 55. [2] "The Praise of Folly," p. 141.

affect the apparatus I am going to give them, then the chance of there being a hereafter of the kind we think about and imagine disappears. On the other hand, it will cause a tremendous sensation if it is successful." Indeed it will, especially among the mediums, whose trade will be ruined. So, in a phrase now classic, we will "wait and see."

II

THE belief in telepathy—namely, that one mind can communicate with another mind, no matter what distance in space divides them, independently of the recognized channels of the sense-organs, or of the use of any mechanical apparatus—is widespread. Ninety per cent. of people among whom the question is raised will at once cite some experience which has satisfied them that telepathy is proven, and among the remaining ten per cent. there will be waverers. One startling incident, one dream fulfilled, suffices as the swallow to make their summer. The high priests of Spiritualism are cited as authorities from whom there can be no appeal, as if mere authority had any validity. Sir Oliver Lodge is convinced that "telepathy, as a recently discovered fact, opens a new and obscure chapter in science..... so that the distance between England and India is no barrier to the sympathetic communication of intelligence in some way of which we are at present ignorant." Sir William Barrett is satisfied that it is one among other phenomena to which "the laws of the physical universe are inapplicable," and "which transcend knowledge derived from our sense-perceptions." "Unless," he adds, "we reject all testimony.....there can be no doubt that a distant person can, by his directed thought, or by a dream, create a phantom of himself in the mind of a distant percipient" ("Psychical Research," pp. 109, 113). But, he candidly says, "how telepathy is propagated we have not the remotest idea," and he dismisses

as futile the analogies between it and wireless telegraphy and radio-activity which ignorance suggests. So, in their admission of nescience, both physicists take shelter under the maxim, "Obscurum per obscurius," which, freely rendered, is, "Whatever you know nothing about assume to be the cause of everything else."

It was disconcerting to read in Dr. M'Dougall's book on "Body and Mind," published in 1911, that he regarded the evidence for the reality of telepathy "to be of such a nature as to compel the assent of any competent person who studies it impartially." But in his recently published "Group Mind" that eminent psychologist abandons that definite position and admits that "telepathic communication has not hitherto been independently established," and that, "if and in so far as it occurs, it does so sporadically and only between individuals specially attuned to one another." So Dr. M'Dougall's recantation is only partial and hazy.

Let us briefly consider what physiology has to say on the subject. All our knowledge is derived from sense-impressions. The sense-organs have specialized nerve-endings, each of which is tuned to receive and transmit its special form of energy. Sound-waves cannot stimulate the optic nerves, nor light-waves stimulate the aural nerves, nor does the sensation of smell result from tactile stimuli; and so on through the series. Each of the sense-organs transmits the stimuli to the receiving central nervous system—i.e., the brain, and perception results through the changes set up in the cortex or layer of grey cellular substance which, as it were, roofs-in the cerebrum, and is the material basis of mind, the seat of the as yet unexplained problem of consciousness. Therein are localized the psychic centres to which the

several sensory nerves transmit the reports which they receive from the outer world. It is interesting to note, by the way, that recent research indicates that, unlike the cells of the body generally, the neurons or nerve cells, if destroyed, cannot be replaced ; but, failing this, they last the entire life of the individual of whom they form a part. They are perpetual cells of the greatest importance for the preservation of the commonwealth of the social organization of the body. Each human brain is built on a uniform plan ; it is boxed-up in a bony, skin-covered, usually hair-covered, skull. It is insulated from every other brain, and contains no indication that any part of it is specialized to receive stimuli from any channel other than the sense-organs, or in some way—as to which both Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir William Barrett confess ignorance—from any ethereal or other subtle vibrations.

To quote Sir Ray Lankester :—

> Telepathy is simply a boldly invented word for a supposed phenomenon which has never been demonstrated. It is an unfair and unwarranted draft on the credit of science which its signatories have not met by the assignment of any experimental proof. There is not one man of science, however mystic and credulous his trend, among those who pass this word "telepathy" on to the great unsuspecting, newspaper-reading public, who will venture to assert that he can show to me or to any committee of observers experimental proof of the existence of the thing to which this portentous name is given.[1]

Time alone prevents citation from physico-psychologists who speak with authority—namely, Sir Bryan Donkin, the late Sir Thomas Clouston, Dr. Bramwell, and others,

[1] Letter to the "Westminster Gazette," Dec. 15, 1903. See Sir Ray's "Kingdom of Man," p. 88. Also his article on "Is there a Revival of Superstition?" ("R. P. A. Annual," 1922), wherein he speaks of "that pretentious fiction, telepathy."

all of whom testify to the negative results in their search for evidence of telepathy.

How, then, can the numerous occurrences grouped under telepathy be accounted for? Theories formulated by men of science can be proved or disproved by experiment and observation; and when, after repeated tests, the results anticipated by the theory are found to be unvarying, it is established. Given the chance and the capacity, every person can verify those results for himself. But the difficulty which confronts any effort to examine evidence in support of telepathy—and this applies to other branches of the occult—is that its believers can offer only personal experiences; experiences fitful, limited, and rarely exactly repeated, to which no experimental tests are possible. They cannot be put in a crucible or under a microscope. Even were it possible to capture the experience at the moment of its occurrence, by what means could it be verified?

The one and all-sufficing argument which demolishes the telepathic theory is that what is assumed to be due to telepathy is explained by coincidences. These impress the imagination, they beguile the believer to take the line of least resistance, and the ease of the way leads him to false conclusions. Francis Bacon's shrewd comment on the inferences drawn from "Dreams and Predictions of Astrologie" hits the bull's-eye. In "Prophecies" he says: "First that Men marke when they hit and never marke when they miss." The myriad number of dreams unfulfilled count as nothing against one dream that comes true; and it would be little short of miraculous if, in the crowded incidents of our lives, a certain proportion of them were not coincidental with happenings elsewhere.

Careful sifting of the stories told in proof of telepathy establishes the fact that those in which some weak link in the chain of evidence is not detected are few, if any. It is not a question of wilful inaccuracy or distortion, but of defects due to the treachery of memories, especially in regard to what is essential—correctness of dates and details. "It seems difficult to place any limit on the untrustworthiness of human testimony, especially in cases where the emotions are involved, or where there is craving for edification."[1]

Anxiety concerning absent ones begets premonitions which, if they happen to be fulfilled, make belief in telepathy unshakable. Imagination exaggerates the closeness of the coincidence, and assumes correspondence of time which, on examination, is found invalid. Nevertheless, a whole system of belief in thought-transference is built on the fragile foundation of dreams about persons, distance from whom emphasizes solicitude, and to whom some dreaded disaster has happened at or about the time when they were in the thoughts or dreams of folks at home.

There are no possible means of knowing what is the percentage of coincidences to the unnumbered millions of brains. To some of us there has come the agony of loss of dear ones far away, but the message travelled, not by brain-waves from the dying, only by the mechanical letter or cablegram. In the late War, how few are the recorded cases of what are called telepathic communications! There were thousands passing sleepless nights, wondering how their fathers, sons, and brothers fared in the trenches, from whom no message

[1] Frank Podmore, "Telepathic Hallucinations," p. 36.

sped through the air. No matter: a coincidence here and there, duly made public, kept alive faith in telepathy. If such direct transmission and receipt of energy as telepathy assumes is possible, mind acting on mind at a distance, why has so valuable a means of communication been neglected? Why did not our generals in the late War abolish as superfluous the so-called "Intelligence Department" and tap-off by telepathic methods what plans were in the brains of the enemy's generals, or vice versa? Why did I not apply the same method to get at the brain of some astute financier, and know therefrom what securities should be bought and what should be sold? With such a psychical instrument at command, telegraphs and telephones could be scrapped, correspondence dispensed with, even speech made unnecessary. But the prospect that telepathy may become a satisfactory substitute for existing means of communication will be fulfilled at the Greek Kalends. Experiments to establish the validity or otherwise of telepathy or thought-transference have been carried on by some researchers, notably by Dr. Coover at the Leland Stanford Junior University of California. He "selected" a card from a pack of cards, depicted it sharply in his imagination, and "willed" for fifteen or twenty seconds that it should come into the mind of another individual who was present and making efforts to receive the telepathic communication. The other individuals who were also to receive the message were favourably inclined to telepathy; at the conclusion of the experiment they were to name the cards, and at the same time to indicate the degree of certainty with which they answered. In all, 10,000 experiments were made. The number of correct answers was precisely what it should

be by the ordinary laws of chance, without any telepathic effort whatever. The percentage of correct answers was precisely the same as when no "willing" was attempted. A further set of experiments was made on ten "sensitives," five of whom were mediums and believers in telepathy. Their answers were found to be in no respect more accurate than those of the students—in fact, to be identical with what might be expected from the laws of pure chance.

To those who are swayed by bias in favour of the supranormal, what has been said will not carry conviction. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." But if it be possible to wean the believer from a spurious cult and arrest its further advance, it may be effected if he will read "The Road to En-Dor." Lieut. Jones, the chief actor in the tragi-comedy told in that book, with his fellow-conspirator Lieut. Hill, was a prisoner of war at Yozgad in Turkey. He sought to escape boredom by constructing an ouija board, the performances on which by himself and others in the camp gave him the hint to make planchette-writing the vehicle of messages purporting to come from discarnate spirits. He and his fellow-plotter carefully memorized details of war news and items of general gossip which, for the most past forgotten by others, enabled them to build up a mass of material to pass as spirit-messages. They devised an ingenious code which shows how the tricks of the Zancigs and all other so-called thought-readers can be worked with or without speech. They fooled a hundred of their fellow-prisoners and won the confidence of the Turkish Commandant and his interpreter by playing on their avarice in professing to know where some buried treasure was hidden. This was part of a

plan to secure more liberty and chance of escape; but it failed. Then they feigned madness, were certified insane and sent to a hospital in Constantinople, the "spirit-messages" throughout playing the magic part, which, as Lieut. Jones says in his Preface, were received by his fellow-prisoners as "from the world beyond" or "from other minds in this sphere." He adds that the arrival of Sir Oliver Lodge's "Raymond" in the camp only served to confirm their credulity; hence, "we do know that, in the face of the most elaborate and persistent efforts to detect fraud, it is possible to convert intelligent, scientific, and otherwise highly educated men to Spiritualism by means of the arts and methods employed by 'mediums' in general." The armistice secured the repatriation of the *soi-disant* lunatics.

Widespread among intelligent people is the belief that certain persons possess a special faculty of divining the locality of water or of metalliferous veins, and, in former days, of discovery of buried treasure. That it finds believers and exponents among Spiritualists is no wonder, because it has affinity with the theory of telepathy in the assumption that the dowser is gifted with a psychical faculty for his task. The late Dr. Alfred R. Wallace had no doubt that "all true dowsing is due to spirit impression";[1] and Sir William Barrett, who has written copiously on the subject, sees in the divining of the existence of underground water the presence of a supersensuous perceptive faculty "in the dowser."[2] This obscure perceptive power or instinctive detection of the hidden object of his search may not excite any consciousness of the fact on the part

[1] "Letters and Reminiscences," vol. ii.
[2] "Psychical Research," p. 183.

of the dowser, but it may be adequate to produce a nervous stimulus which will start the involuntary muscular action that twists the forked rod held by the dowser in somewhat unstable equilibrium.

We have, in the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, to "wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places." In the Editorial Notes of "Discovery, the Monthly Popular Journal of Knowledge," of September, 1920, I read with some surprise an unqualified support of Sir William Barrett's hypothesis. The editor, Dr. Russell, says that "it seems quite certain that this power [the dowser's] is genuine. For more than four hundred years stories describing it have been current." That antiquity of record proves validity is a strange argument for a Doctor of Science to employ. Dr. Russell continues: "Something causes the dowser to twist the twig.....the cause is psychical certainly, and not physical. There is no physical action between the water, or whatever it is that is being sought, and the twig. Murmurs in the literature about electrical, thermal, or radio-activity show merely the ignorance of the writer in the elements of natural science." We must say unto the editor of "Discovery": "Physician, heal thyself."

Among well-nigh every people there is found belief in the magical power of rods or wands. Rhabdomancy lies many centuries behind the four to which Dr. Russell limits it. Did space permit, it would be interesting to trace the history of one of the oldest examples in the long, probably never to be closed, list of superstitions and illusions. Suffice it to say that the forked hazel or willow twig is in direct descent from the caduceus of Mercury, whose assumed magic powers link it with the

broomstick of the mediæval witch, whereon she rode through the air. It was formerly much in request for the detection of thieves and other criminals, but among ourselves its use is limited to dowsing. Some of the professors of that art dispense with it: they think that the impulse from the hidden spring or vein comes direct, evidencing itself by nausea or nerve-tremors—thus shifting the seat of activity from the rod to the body. (Some of us occasionally have similar sensations not to be connected with dowsing.) As it is admitted that the twig sometimes bends where no water is, that must be eliminated as a cause of the bending. If, on the other hand, the water is found in the absence of the twig, that must be eliminated as a cause of the discovery. So the question is narrowed to the psychology of the dowser. Excluding suggestions of trickery, is he in the possession of a special psychical faculty, or is he the victim of a delusion?

The answer, unlike the water sought after, lies on the surface. The movement of the dowsing-twig is not due to any occult property which emanates from the thing hidden. It is explained by the muscular fatigue resulting from the effort of keeping the hands and fingers in one position. The strained hands seek relief, and, as they move, the forked twig moves with them mechanically.

While the cooler-headed can control this muscular relaxation, those who are mentally absorbed in the strange procedure find their tired hands (tired, though they are unconscious of it) suddenly turning, and the twig flies upwards in a way which they can neither explain nor control. These are the honest, self-deceived dowsers, who have been sufficiently numerous to estab-

lish a belief in the existence of a mysterious agency causing the twig to "duck."[1]

I think that both geologists and hydrologists are agreed that not only is it not difficult to find water well distributed throughout this island, but that it would be more difficult to miss it. Given careful observance of the lie of the land, of indications of nearness of water in surface rocks and of their water-bearing properties or the reverse, and of external signs and levels, there will be no need of exceptional shrewdness to indicate where wells may be sunk. At any rate, the facts of the distribution of underground water seem to be fatal to the common belief that the diviner's sensations are caused by the nearness of water at the points where these sensations are specially felt, or that he possesses any peculiar or abnormal faculty for its discovery. Experiments with water-finders, and examination of their claims, go to prove this. A report on investigations carried on under the leadership of Professor Wertheimer, Principal of the Merchant Venturers' Technical College, Bristol, during 1904–5, schedules the result of sundry experiments, failure on the part of the dowser being explained thus: "Consciously or unconsciously, some one influenced him by thought-transference." Here are the Professor's conclusions: "In so far as these experiments have gone, I am inclined to believe that the motion of the dowser's rod, and the sensations which he experiences, are not due to any cause outside himself. The experiments do not answer definitely the question whether or not dowsers have the power to find water; but I think they show (*a*) that experienced dowsers did not give the

[1] See "The Divining Rod," chap. xxxix., "Diversions of a Naturalist," by Sir Ray Lankester.

same indications in the same place, and (*b*) that the movements of their rods were, in several of the experiments described, due purely to subjective causes" ("Times," September 27, 1906).

Eight years later a committee of diviners and scientists, the chief expert among these being Mr. William Whitaker, F.R.S., well known for his useful work in Applied Geology, chose the neighbourhood of Guildford for a series of demonstrations. The conclusions at which the committee (of course excluding the dowsers) arrived are in harmony with Professor Wertheimer's. They are "that, whatever sensitiveness to underground water may exist in certain persons, of which some evidence may be given, it is not sufficiently definite and trustworthy to be of much practical value. Moreover, the lack of agreement with each other shows that it is more a matter of personal mentality than of any direct influence of the water. The diviners as a rule confine their attention to small streams of water; and as there are few places where these cannot be found, they may well show a large percentage of success." Yet, with such evidence against them, physicists there are, as references already given show, who ignore the Law of Parsimony, the logical principle that no more forces or causes should be assumed than are necessary to account for the effects. Thus does Occultism, by a mass of gratuitous assumptions, retard approach to the discovery of truth. Hume's axiom holds the field: "As finite added to finite never approaches a hair's-breadth nearer to infinite, so a thing incredible in itself acquires not the smallest accession of probability by the accumulation of testimony."[1]

[1] "Life and Correspondence," vol. i, p. 480.

Apparently the Masters in the Spiritualistic Israel have limits to their credulity; hence they look askance on palmistry. But it cannot be excluded from the occult. It has its roots deep down in, and draws sustenance from, that pre-human, inherited instinct of curiosity which is one of the most powerful and insatiate of all instincts, source of wonder, and impetus to that spirit of inquiry without which no discovery or invention or progress in any direction would have been possible. In the case of palmistry the instinct of curiosity is stimulated by the common desire to know the future and predict what of fate or fortune it holds. Round that momentous question the spirit of man revolves, like planet tethered to sun. Palmistry has a high antiquity. Its origin is to be sought for in the speculative East as far as China, rather than in the practical West, whither it was probably brought by gypsies. It has a literature of its own in India, where to this day it is practised by a special caste of Brahmans called Joshi. In his "Historiæ Animalium" (i, 15), Aristotle observes that long-lived persons have one or two lines which extend through the whole hand, while short-lived persons have lines not thus extended. Medieval writers, among whom may be cited Erasmus in his "Colloquy," "The Old Man's Dialogue," have much to say on a subject which, down to the present day, fills a number of treatises witnessing both to the seriousness and the unconscious humour of their authors. The latest among these is a "Catechism of Palmistry," dealing with every phase of the subject in six hundred and thirty-seven answers to questions, based on delineations of tens of thousands of hands by the compiler. "The British Institute of Mental Science (Incorporated) has selected the work as its

text-book for candidates who are examined for its diplomas."

Palmistry rests its case on an assumed connection between brain and hand as supplying a key to character, and on the doctrine of "Signatures," which, among its many symbolic vagaries about lines and markings, connects planetary influences with the hand. Its professors do not neglect other and more rational keys to interpretation of character and temperament supplied by facial expression and general movements, adding to these conscious or unconscious self-revelations by the subject, enabling them sometimes to form a judgment so correct as to strengthen belief in Occultism.

The palmist deals with the monticuli or mounts of the hand and their markings, and with the lines between them, giving prominence to the thumb as the outstanding feature, concerning which, as an important factor in man's evolution, he is on solid ground. Astrological significance is given to the seven mounts, which are named after the planets, while the four chief lines of the hand are interpreted as indicating by their length the duration of life. Thus a psychic or predictive meaning is given to purely mechanical conditions of the organ.

The creases and infoldings of our hands are produced by the action of the muscles, the foldings being "so disposed that the thick loose skin shall be capable of bending in grasping, whilst it is held down to the skeleton of the hand by fibrous lines of attachment so as to prevent its slipping, with consequent insecurity of grip." The same lines and mounts are present in the hands and feet of the anthropoid apes; the so-called lines of love, life, health, and so forth, are present alike in the simian and the human hand, and, presumably,

should have the same interpretation. But the authorities at the Zoological Gardens, apparently, have not deemed it worth while to submit the destiny of the big apes to the forecast of the palmist. That the mystic lines are found on the palms of still-born babes should give added cause of hesitancy to consult the West End prophets. The matter may be summed up thus: there is as much warrant for reading fortunes in the lines of the hands as for reading them in the creases in the knees of trousers and in the elbows of coats.

The list of further occupants of the lower plane of Occultism includes medium-trainers, psychotherapists or faith-healers, dealers in Memphis screens, psychostatists or soul-weighers, spirit photographers, phrenologists, believers in luck-bringers, astrologists, numerists, *et hoc genus omne*.

The extent to which Occultism flourishes, what allied organizations knit together its several branches, and how active and eager is their propaganda, can be known only by reading the various organs of the cult, as "Light," the "International Psychic Gazette," the "Occult Review," and the fortune-telling "Raphael's Prophetic Messenger" and "Old Moore's Almanack." The advertisement columns of these periodicals supply the names and addresses of the professors of the several arts, and also information as to the meetings of the various associations. Those who desire initiation into the mysteries of mediumship can secure this at a moderate cost, even without the trouble of personal tuition. One advertiser offers to teach "psychic development" for a guinea: that sum ensures twelve monthly lessons by post and answers to all questions. Another "normal psychist and telepathist," so he thus describes

himself, offers the same advantages for half a guinea; while for the modest sum of sixpence there can be had, post free, a "Manual of Directions for Beginners at Séances." Psychotherapists offer cures at preposterously low fees. Their methods promise immediate relief from neuralgia, toothache, and headache; from gout, sciatica, and influenza in a few minutes; and from appendicitis, neurasthenia, internal tumours, and cataract in a few visits.

There was recently shown in a jeweller's window in the town where I live a drawing of an arm in which the blood was depicted as flowing in a broad red stream from the third finger direct to the heart. This was to prove that by wearing an anti-rheumatic ring, which has "magnetic" studs inside it, on the third finger of the left hand, the uric acid is drawn from the blood and the complaint cured. The gradual discoloration of the finger is proof of the success of the remedy. The ring, priced at from five shillings to five guineas, is, we are told, "worn by Members of the Royal Family, the Nobility and Gentry, and by thousands of eminent personages throughout the world."

Following the "absent treatment" in vogue among Christian Scientists, who, on prepayment of fees, transmit to the afflicted the telepathic enegies which radiate from the "Healing Word," a lady psychiatrist will cure patients of any complaint by correspondence, the condition being that the details respecting it are accompanied by the fee. There can be had from dealers in "goods for the occult," at the cost of half a guinea, "vitic rods to restore energy to the anæmic, and to arrest senile decay"; while for the same amount there can be bought "Memphis Psychic Screens" for observ-

ing the hypothetical exudation named "human aura"—ephemeral, enigmatical protuberances of various degrees of density projected momentarily from the bodies of certain mediums and vanishing in the twinkling of an eye. Two shillings and ninepence is asked for "Memphis Incense," the purpose of which is not stated. Possibly the term may be borrowed from Rabelais, who says that "Pythagoras travelled far to visit the memphitical vaticinators"[1]—a statement which, however, is challenged by Professor Burnet in his "Early Greek Philosophy."[2] Rutter says that a memphian stone "has power to bring a deadly sleepe on all the senses."[3] Perhaps the modern article has narcotizing properties whereby those who inhale it are lulled to clairvoyance, as was the priestess of Apollo by the miasmic vapour issuing from the cleft in the Delphian rock. Sir Oliver Lodge attaches importance to "the somnambulic conditions, when the conscious or noticing aspect of the mind is latent, and when the things which influence the person are.....either something internal or else something not belonging to the ordinary known universe at all."[4] As Matthew Arnold puts it:—

> Born into life, who lists
> May what is false hold dear,
> And for himself make mists
> Through which to see less clear.

In the occult atmosphere its Krypton-charged fog never lifts. Poetic imagination, using art as its handmaid, has encircled the heads of divine beings and sacred persons with discs or halos; sometimes, as in the case of medieval saints, the whole body is depicted as enveloped

[1] Bk. ii, ch. 18. [2] P. 18.
[3] "Shepheards' Holy Day." See "New Oxford Dictionary," s.v.
[4] "Proc. Socy. for Psychical Research," vol. x, pt. 26, p. 14.

in a nimbus or cloud-like vestment. Tradition tells of dazzling lights emanating from the divine and holy at certain crises of their lives, as in the transfiguration of Jesus, when his raiment shone white as snow—so brightly that no fuller on earth could whiten it (Matt. xvii, 2, and Mark ix, 3). Paul, on the road to Damascus, could not be seen for the glory of the light which surrounded him (Acts xxii, 11); and when Moses came down from Sinai the skin of his face shone "so that the people were afraid to come nigh" him (Exod. xxxiv, 30). "A certain Abbot Simeon of Constantinople, who lived in the eleventh century, maintained that the monks, by long fasting and prayer and by fixing their eyes on their stomachs, would see within their bodies an Uncreated Light. This gave rise to a doctrine so-named, and to a controversy which lasted nearly a century and threatened to rend the Eastern Church in twain. That Church still stands pledged, in virtue of an unreversed decision of a Council, to belief in the Uncreated Light."[1] The occultist seizes on these and kindred examples from Eastern and Western hagiology as evidence that ecstatic conditions render the body translucent, intensifying the aura which emanates from and plays round seer or saint. The auric colours are said to proceed from the higher or "astral" self, or, more mundanely, from the nervous system. But as they are, like the fairies, visible only to the eyes of faith, through which it is the privilege of the clairvoyant to see them, there is ample scope for the creation of symbols and assumption of the several functions which are assigned to the chromatic elements composing

[1] Athelstan Riley's "Mount Athos," pp. 193-5.

the aura. In an article on "The Psychic Significance of the Cat," in the "Occult Review" of June, 1917, that animal is said to have "a green aura," as to the purpose of which the writer is discreetly silent. But surely the limits of extravaganza are reached in a statement made in a recently published book, entitled "Miadoxia," wherein the author, "a Priest"—he withholds his name—speaking of the Reserved Sacrament, says that "sensitive psychics are at once aware of its presence, and some even assert that a brilliant radiance emanates from it." Very old is the belief that cloud-like forms, like wraiths and phantoms, appear to leave the body at death, but their tenuity often eludes mortal vision.[1] Such is the explanation given by Dr. Fournier d'Albe, "greatly bold in speculation," as one of his followers describes him. Both of them take seriously the reports of an American, Dr. Duncan M'Dougall, of Boston, that experiments carried out in weighing the body both before and after death appear to show a decided loss of weight at the moment the person expires. The very second when this happened was determined by the dropping of the scale; in each case there was a loss of weight of from half an ounce to an ounce. This, with an ingenuity more creditable to his heart than his head, Dr. M'Dougall assumed represented the soul-weight. When a dying

[1] In his "Drama of Love and Death" Mr. Edward Carpenter says: "Amazing as are the materializations connected with mediums..... these phenomena are now far too well established and confirmed by careful and scientific observation to admit (in the mass) of any reasonable doubt. And similarly with the wraiths or phantoms which are projected from dying or lately dead persons, the evidence for them in general is much too abundant and well attested to allow of disbelief" (p. 147). Of this dreamy verbiage may be said what Mr. Carpenter says about spirit photography, that "the idea is a little comic" (p. 195).

dog was placed in scales balanced to the fraction of an ounce, the weight at death in every case remained the same. Against the argument as to the non-survival of the animal which the experiment would seem to support, there should be cited the communication from Raymond Lodge's control, the little Indian girl Feda, that he has "a nice doggie with him"!

Patience, already tried by this insipid stuff, shall not have boredom added thereto by details of the astral body which occultists believe is a replica of the physical, compounded of diaphanous matter, and visible only to clairvoyants. I name it merely to show that it has links with the astrology of to-day. Since the remote period when watchers of the skies interpreted human destiny by the movements of the stars, belief in that connection has been persistent. Our daily speech bears unconscious witness to the significance which once inhered in such words as "jovial," "mercurial," "saturnine," "martial," "consideration," "influence," and "disaster." There was established in 1913 an Occult Club for the study of astrology, the opening date being fixed after study of the stars. One of our eminent writers, lately deceased, was a convinced believer in that spurious science. He accumulated a library on the subject, and, under a pseudonym, published more than one book about it. "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The advertisement columns of the "International Psychic Gazette" give answer. "Human life is the science of the stars. Send me your birth-time and one shilling postal order," says one advertiser. Another offers an astrological chart, with career outlined, for three shillings. For fourteenpence you can learn your

place in the zodiac, to what diseases you are subject, how to cure them, and whom to marry. And so on, *ad finem*. As to prophecy, in his issue for the current year Old Moore's forecast for May is that "the stationary position of Venus will give cause for festivities and rejoicings in England, and will also benefit Palestine in its internal development. Saturn will bring dire trouble on Moscow, and at home there will be many casualties in places of amusement, more especially in the Metropolis. The life of a king is threatened, and some postal or transport strike is imminent."

Astrologists and numerists meet together in the assignment of a spiritual vibration to each number in its connection with vibrations from the planets. The "International Psychic Gazette" from October, 1917, to May, 1918, contains a series of articles on "The Significance of Numbers," wherein the theory of Pythagoras runs in riotous extravagance. We know little about that remarkable man, and learn nothing worth the knowing from the moderns who bear his name. He left no writings; his traditional sayings, collected in "The Golden Words," prove the loftiness of his ethical teaching, while in the religious brotherhood which he founded his aim was the reformation of public and private life. He is of the rare immortal company of Ionian philosophers in whose speculations and previsions are the germ of modern discoveries—notably of the order and unity of the cosmos. They may be added to the roll-call of those who "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but, having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them." Thales held that water is the common primitive element; Anaximander that it is air; while the disciples of Pythagoras applied his theory