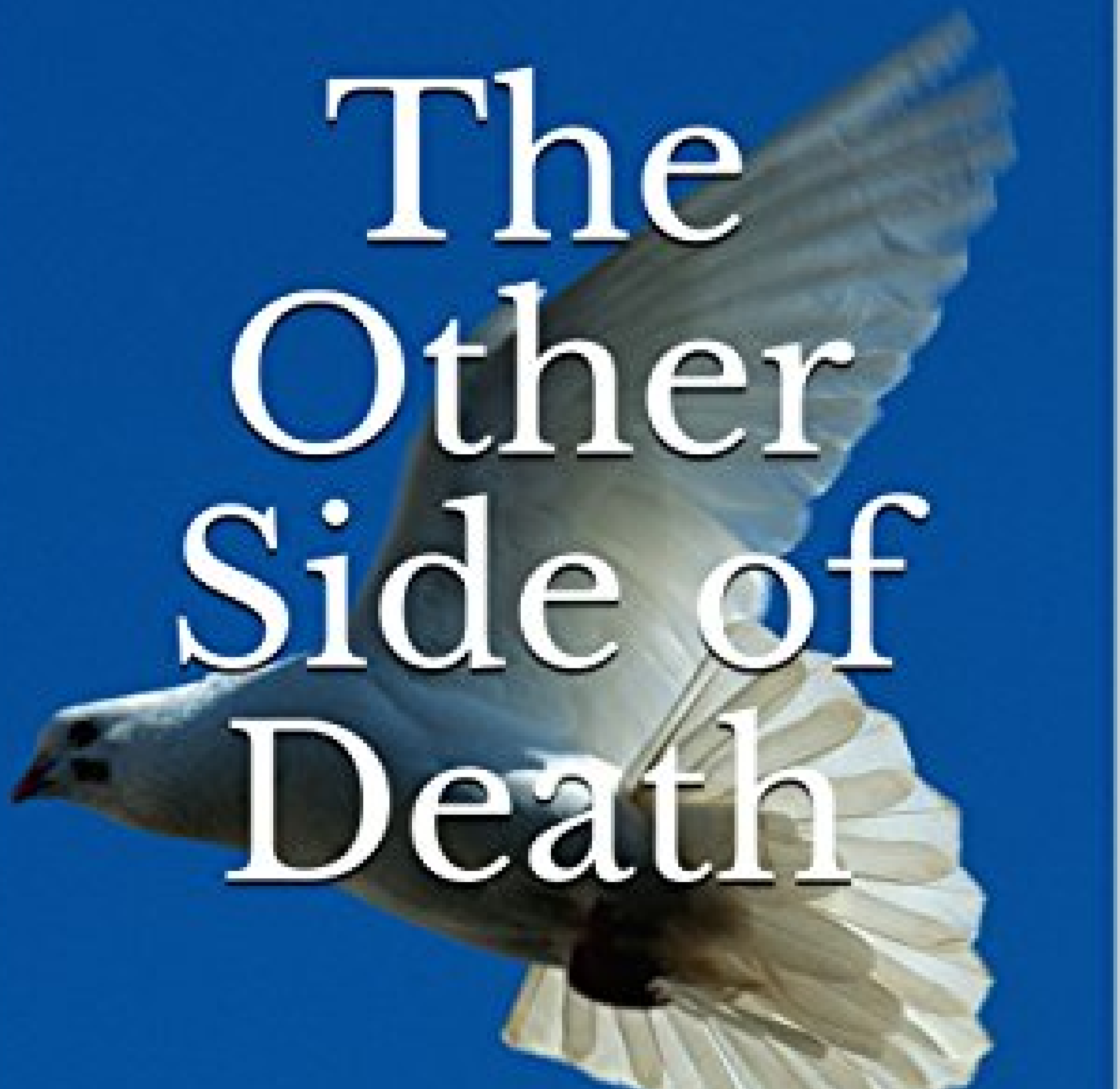
Chapman Cohen

The Other Side of Death



A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Future Life, with a Study of Spiritualism

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

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BY

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PREFACE.

If on a given subject knowledge was absolute men would move on a level of complete equality. And the same equality would prevail where ignorance was complete. From that point of view the present writer may claim to know as much as any man living on "the other side of death"—that is, if we accept the phrase literally. But while a demonstration of general ignorance would not be without its uses, it is not the main theme of this work. *The Other Side of Death* has reference to that aspect, or to those aspects, of death which popular theology leave entirely out of account. There it is commonly assumed that either we must accept the established religious interpretations of death, and of all the feelings that cluster round it, or we are doomed to disheartening pessimism. I hope sincerely that readers of these pages will realize that neither view is justifiable. Death has its place in the evolutionary process, and when that is understood theology loses its force and its terrors. If the author has succeeded in placing before his readers a rational and a satisfactory account of the feelings that are inseparable from the fact of death he will have accomplished the purpose with which he set out.

C. C.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

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CHAPTER I.

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

If universality of belief were really a guarantee of truth, then, indeed, would the belief in survival beyond death be entitled to rank as one of the best authenticated of human convictions. For in some form or another it is found with all peoples, even in those cases where it may reasonably be questioned whether the belief in God exists. It has come to us through the ages, kept alive by the combined forces of the self-interest which attaches to all established institutions, and the love of speculation which is, after all, one of the worthiest of human endowments. We owe more to this quality than is at first sight apparent. And this last statement remains true even where the belief with which speculation busies itself is of little intrinsic value.

The belief in survival does, indeed, appear to lie at the root of all other religious beliefs. It is at least certain that all the priesthoods of the different religions derive their power and prestige and emoluments from it, for it is unlikely that the mere belief in

deity would be enough to secure them the allegiance of the multitude. The belief in God is only an active force so long as the deity is believed to interfere actively and constantly in the affairs of men. And science has removed so much from the control of the gods, they do so little in the world to-day, they promise to do so much less in the future, that mere gratitude for having done something in the past, or for having conferred upon man the debatable gift of existence, would hardly be strong enough to secure to their representatives the positions of power and privilege which they enjoy.

It is, as Lucretius saw, death and the fear of what comes after death that has in all ages given the priesthood its power. Useful functions the priest may perform, but these are discharged in his character as citizen, not in his capacity as a priest. As a priest he is concerned with what lies beyond this world; men have feared him because of his supposed influence with the mysterious powers that were assumed to govern destiny here and hereafter; and even to-day, when the belief itself is wearing thin, and its expression undergoing so great an outward transformation, it is in virtue of the old formulæ and the old forms that the allegiance of men and women is retained.

But, in sober truth, it is to-day quite as much with the believer as with the belief that the Freethinker is concerned. It is this that justifies an examination of a belief which, in the opinion of the present writer, represents nothing better than a gigantic illusion, and which even if it were not, for reasons that will presently be advanced, might well be left aside as of no pressing importance. When Colonel Ingersoll was

accused of hating Christians he explained that he did not hate the man because he had got Christianity, he hated Christianity because it had got the man. So our chief anxiety in settling whether the belief in a future life is true or not lies, not with the belief itself, but with those who hold it. One has only to recall the part played by religious organizations in the social economy, and the time and energy spent on religion, to realize the importance of the beliefs upon which they build. If the world has really given way to an illusion, then in some way or another that illusion must be dispelled. And, after all, a great deal of the world's progress has consisted in clearing out of the way illusions that were once as world-wide as the belief in a future life. Battles, both physical and mental, are fought not always over what is actually true, but over what people believe to be so.

But, more so than is the case with other subjects, anyone who attempts to deal with the question of a future life runs no small risk of being drowned under successive waves of sentimentality. He is met, not with what people ought to believe, or what they are justified in believing, but what they would like to believe, or what it is pleasant to believe. Or, with tremendous solemnity he is informed how greatly the belief has ennobled life, robbed death of its terrors, and given comfort to the sorrow-stricken. In this way the believer manages to convince himself that he is advocating a nobler view of life than is the Free-thinker, who is pilloried as a being of coarser grain, careless of what the consequences may be of his teaching. And as few care to stand before the public in the character depicted by the believer, we have only too

often a repudiation of the belief in survival in tones that would suggest one were giving up something of a demonstrated value, instead of a belief that has been responsible for incalculable misery.

For my own part I am quite convinced that the belief in a future life has never divested death of a single terror which it did not first of all create; and that it has ennobled life is sheer assumption. Indeed, one purpose of this work is to prove that the belief in a future life has caused far more misery than happiness, and that in spite of the use of certain stereotyped formulæ by such as believe, believers show no greater fortitude in the presence of death than does the most convinced sceptic. Faced with facts human nature is apt to show scant consideration for the requirements of mere theory.

Each of these points, with others, will be dealt with in detail later. But a word or two may now be said concerning the assumption that disbelief in a future state involves a "lower" view of life than does a belief in its existence. And here I am genuinely puzzled to realize in what way perpetual existence is higher or nobler than existence of a definite, if incalculable, term. I can understand the claim that life is morally admirable or the reverse, or that it would have been far better for all of us—to put the matter paradoxically—had we never existed. But what has the question of length to do with nobility? It is a commonplace that a life which terminates at forty may be infinitely more admirable than one that extends to a century. And it is equally true that of many lives the only cause they offer for congratulation is that they come to an end. But it is certainly an ill measure of a man's worth to

count the number of years during which he treads the earth. And if the life of a century has no more intrinsic claim to admiration than one of half that length, then it follows that an eternity of life has no advantage over that of a century. It is not a question of quantity but of quality. That life is good or bad are both intelligible and arguable propositions, but whether we conclude that it is one or the other we must base our conclusion upon life as we know it. If we conclude that life is good, then cutting it short at the grave cannot make it bad. We merely desire more of it. If it is bad, prolonging it will not make it better. In that case we only have cause to regret its being. As the Irish orator declared, we should all have been money in pocket had we never been born.

Of course, it is argued that an extension of life beyond the grave gives opportunities for the correction of faults and for the development of character, but those who so argue mistake the meaning of character and the conditions of its development. With that, also, we will deal later. At present it is enough to assert that the belief in a future life deserves no greater measure of respect than does any other speculative belief. If, indeed, this particular belief has become closely associated with some of our deepest and tenderest feelings there is the greater need to be on our guard against the distorting effects of emotion on what should be a strictly scientific enquiry. The essential question is, "Is the belief in a future life true?" If that question is settled everything else may be left to take care of itself.

While there are many extrinsic circumstances that make a discussion of the truth of a future life of some

value, the intrinsic importance of the belief is of the slightest. Immortality is not, it may be noted, something that each of us may achieve or fail to achieve. It is ours as a natural endowment, or the whole thing is an illusion. If it is a fact there is enough, so to speak, to go round. Nothing that we can say or do can alter the fact of immortality, or make it a fact if it is not already one. Either immortality is ours already or it is not. If it is, the only question at issue is the date of our entering the next stage. And there, we are told, arises the whole question. It is whether we enter that next stage prepared to make the most of it and the best of it that makes the question of our belief so important. For it is in view of this continuous development that we should regulate our lives here.

On that two comments may be made. First, if our life there is really a development of our life here, our state in the next stage will be a consequence of our present existence as youth follows boyhood and old age maturity. In that case our immediate and our real concern is with the life we are now leading, and there is no other preparation possible. We do the day's work as well as we can, and there our concern ends. If, on the other hand, attention to life here is not the best preparation for the assumed life hereafter, then the talk of development is the idlest of chatter, and the belief in a future life can only be regarded as a cause of distraction from duty now. The tendency will be to belittle and neglect this life as we are assured of the reality and the importance of another one. Historically, this is what has actually happened whenever there has been a very vivid sense of the reality of a future life. The future is so vast and overpowering

in relation to the present, it is small wonder that a people who permitted it to dominate their thoughts to any serious extent should be proportionately indifferent about the present state of existence.

Second, it is simply untrue to say that the question of a future life is of primary or of pressing importance. It is a curiously distorted vision that can take that view. There are a hundred and one things in which my opinion as to their truth or falsity or utility is of infinitely greater moment than my belief concerning a future life. My convictions concerning sanitation, or the need for light and air, or the fitness of certain people for holding office in the State, may have important and traceable consequences on the life of society. But my belief as to whether there is a future life or not does not clearly affect anything. Those who do not believe in a future life are found to be as loyal, as generous, as devoted to what they believe to be right as are those with the most fervent belief in a life beyond the grave. Clearly, a belief that does not of necessity affect conduct one way or the other cannot well be argued to be of pressing importance. One might as well argue the urgency of settling whether the other side of the moon is habitable.

Yet again it is argued that they who really believe in a future life have a driving power that cannot be equalled by anything else. But here we have only substituted a psychological fallacy for a mis-statement of fact. Any belief, no matter how absurd or how devoid of foundation in fact, so long as it is held with sincerity, and is allied to an earnest nature, will have the same effect. A belief in vegetarianism, in the simple life, even the belief in the necessity for destroy-

ing the belief in immortality, will have the same effect. All that is needed to give a belief "driving power" is—belief. Love of country, love of home, devotion to any ideal is enough to carry a man out of the narrow circle of his egoistic desires, even to the point of sacrificing his life. The man who fails to see that teachings of the most diverse nature and value may claim examples of glorious devotion and ungrudging sacrifice reads history with eyes that are blind to its most obvious lessons.

In the emphasis that is placed upon the alleged elevating influence of the belief in immortality the effect it has had in quite an opposite direction is conveniently forgotten. And yet that aspect of the history of the belief in a future life lies plain for all to see. Living in the environment of to-day it is almost impossible to realize adequately the fear, the degrading fear, which was bred by the Christian doctrine of an after life. And Christian teachers take care that the truth about their religion in this respect shall not be known if they can prevent it. Certainly nothing coarser or more brutalizing than the Christian doctrine of an after life has ever been known. By no less a person than Augustine the whole of the human race was described as being "one damned batch and mass of perdition," and at a much later date Jeremy Taylor could declare, in depicting the condition of the saved, that "husbands shall see their wives, parents shall see their children tormented before their eyes," while "the bodies of the damned shall be crowded together in hell like grapes in a wine press till they burst." Jonathan Edwards also assures us that "God holds sinners in his hands over the

mouth of hell as so many spiders, and he is dreadfully provoked, and he not only hates them, but holds them in utmost contempt, and he will trample them beneath his feet with inexpressible fierceness, he will crush their blood out, and will make it fly so that it will sprinkle his garments and stain all his raiment." These are only specimen quotations, they could be multiplied almost without end, but it does not need much imagination to conceive the terribly brutalizing consequences of teachings of this kind forced upon people from their earliest years. It was only at the price of brutalization that ordinary folk could retain their sanity.

Certainly one may say with safety that while such beliefs are seriously accepted as unquestionable truths, their influence must have been of the most demoralizing kind. Just as when one is brought into daily contact with intolerable cruelty the prevalence of such things can only eventuate in the creation of an abnormal sensitiveness on the one side and a steady process of brutalization on the other. It is utterly impossible for normal human nature to go on believing that the majority of their fellow creatures are destined to the kind of eternal torments depicted by the Christian writers without having their sympathies narrowed, their natures coarsened, and their sense of justice constricted. As a matter of fact the prevalence of these teachings produced a Christian society with a limited number of more refined natures exhibiting a fantastic sensitiveness that borders on the insane, with the overwhelming proportion leading an almost animal existence. And although not the only cause of demoralization sanctioned by the Christian Church, its

doctrine of immortality must be held partly responsible for the terrible coarsening of manners that characterized the Christian ages of the world.

While I write the above, and as an illustration of what has been said, I come across the following from a living leader of English Nonconformity which deserves chronicling as an example of Christian barbarism at the close of the nineteenth century. The Rev. R. F. Horton, a preacher whose sincerity none will question, after dwelling upon the thesis that "everything before death is determined by what we expect after death," says:—

> Men who do not believe in their immortality, if I may use strong and colloquial language, are a public nuisance. They bestialize life, they lower the tone of everything, they make the world a huge graveyard, where the only thought is to eat and drink, and to try to forget that to-morrow we die. I would mark them all, and avoid them, and if they cannot change their mind they should be ostracised from a human society which depends for all vitality and for all progress upon a great and permanent belief in the immortality of man.[1]

Ill-balanced fanaticism and sectarianism could hardly go further than this. Coming from a mediæval monk, or from a gutter evangelist it would be bad enough, coming from one of the leaders of English Nonconformity such sentiments offer irrefutable evidence of the little influence this particular belief has in effecting a genuine moralization of character. The worst

[1] Sermon reported in the *Christian World Pulpit*, December 6, 1899.

that one could say concerning the influence of the belief in immortality receives the fullest justification from such an utterance. A man's judgment must be indeed warped when he can frame an indictment which would exclude from human society some of the foremost men and women of our time on the ground that they bestialize life, and lower the tone of everything. On the contrary, one might say that the departure from human society of men of the type of mind of Dr. Horton is an event that one could face without very serious misgivings as to the future of the race.

There is really only one way in which it could be shown that belief in immortality is of vital consequence to human society. This would be by proving that in its absence human nature either stagnates or deteriorates. But this no one has ever been able to prove. Historically we do not find that nations progress with the strengthening of this belief and deteriorate with its weakening. The evidence is rather the other way about, for from the time of ancient Egypt it has been those who have had the belief in a future life most clearly expressed in their lives that have gone down before those with whom the belief was of a more formal nature. And the same thing holds broadly of individuals; for to argue that individual life deteriorates with a rejection of this belief is wildly untrue. Unbelievers are no longer such rarities as they once were. They are common, their lives are open to the world, and believers meet them in daily intercourse. Believers know that in discharging all the functions of ordinary citizenship the lives of unbelievers move on at least as high a level as do their own. They are quite as ready as others to devote

their lives, their resources, to any cause in which they believe, and they at least can assert that their endeavours are not in the nature of investments that are put out at interest payable in another world. And to those who adopt the tone of mediæval survivals such as Dr. Horton, there is always open the retort that sweating employers, and slum landlords, and unscrupulous financiers, and shady politicians, as well as actually declared criminals are far more frequent in their avowal of belief in immortality than they are in professions of disbelief. If daily experience enforces any lesson at all it is that a good life may be lived and is lived without the remotest reference to a future state of existence. This world holds many good and beautiful things, and it offers opportunities for the display of many good and beautiful qualities, whether there is another life or not. And that is surely the most depressing form of pessimism which asserts that the love of husband and wife, of parent and child, the loyalty of friends, and the glories of art, science and literature are all so much dross unless we live again beyond the grave.

In what follows we shall have to examine in detail many of the points that have here received only a brief notice. What has been said is preliminary to an examination of one of the most wide-spread and, fundamentally, harmful illusions from which humanity has ever suffered.

CHAPTER II.

IS THERE A DESIRE FOR A FUTURE LIFE?

TAKE a hundred people haphazard and ask each of them the question, "Do you believe in a future life?" It is quite probable that an overwhelming majority will answer in the affirmative. Nor would it be far to seek to find the cause of this unanimity. Each of these hundred persons has been brought up in an atmosphere that is, at least professedly, a religious one, and in which a formal adherence is given to certain religious beliefs. Most of them are quite unused to self-analysis, and accustomed to express themselves in terms of the current theology. From that point of view, therefore, the answer to the question is prepared before it is asked. Moreover, in a society such as ours there is an accepted tradition in our general literature which echoes what theology teaches because it has been developed under its influence. Nothing is commoner than to find it assumed that in some way a future life completes and embellishes this one, and also the complementary tradition that those who do not accept the belief are robbed of a comfort and an inspiration which others possess, and what is more, they feel their loss. These things are not argued, they are assumed, and because they are assumed without warranty are held to be unquestionable.

A groundless assumption is followed by an im-

pertinence. The next step is the assertion that the man who professes to be without the desire for a future life is abnormal, or, at best, is only illustrating a passing phase of temper. To use a common illustration, he is like a deaf mute denying the existence of sound. I believe, however, that closer analysis will show that the abnormality, if it exists anywhere, lies with those who fancy that the value and meaning of this life is to be found in the existence of some future state. And I think it can be shown, when we examine the contents of the mind, that with the normal person there exists no real desire for a future life, little genuine belief in it, and no evidence that it provides comfort in face of disaster. All that is needed to prove these things is to separate the expressed belief from the various factors with which it has been associated. In brief, what we have here is not a statement of fact, but an interpretation of certain facts. The religious man says one thing when he really ought, in justice to his own feeling, to say something quite different.

Let me venture on a piece of self-analysis. So far as I am able to understand my own frame of mind I have no conscious desire for a life beyond the grave. I am conscious of a desire for life, or negatively, a disinclination for death, but that is all. On the other hand I am not conscious of any disinclination to live again, my mind here is simply a blank. If I permit myself to speculate on the matter I can easily conceive circumstances that would make perpetual existence a curse, or, at best, a burden. But I am conscious of nothing in the shape of regrets. Mentally I can no more conceive existence after I am dead than I can picture myself as living before I was born. Or,

yet again, I can easily picture to myself the growth of an abnormal state of mind in favour of either existence or non-existence. It is possible to so dwell upon a fancied desire for a thing that the possession of it appears to be one of the most imperative of needs.

If it is said that I may have a desire to live again, not to satisfy some purely selfish feeling, but in order to meet again those whom I have known and loved here, I can only say, still keeping to the territory of my own consciousness—which as evidence is quite as good as that of anybody else—that I am not at all conscious of a desire to meet anyone in the next world. I desire to meet and to be with them here; I regret most keenly the separation caused by death, but it is only by a misunderstanding of frustrated feeling that this is read as a desire to meet beyond the grave. What I have, in common with others, is a desire for intercourse with certain members of my kind. But it is surely gratuitous to argue from this a desire for communion after death.

It may be said that in thus arguing I am avowing myself as a kind of human monstrosity, and therefore my feelings offer no criterion by which to judge others. But my whole argument is that, far from being either unique or abnormal, I am perfectly normal, and that if others will only analyse their own mental states they will find that they are much as I am. The recognition that we are all much alike in our fundamental characteristics is, indeed, one of the prime requirements to an understanding of many of the things over which we are so gravely puzzled. We all have the same feelings, the same passions, and, fundamentally, the same appetites. It is in our beliefs concerning

them, and in our modes of interpreting them, that we differ most widely. And it is just here that education plays its part for good or ill. It may quite easily develop a morbid or a false view of life, or encourage an unwarrantable belief concerning the nature of our mental states. It is not so long ago the theory of demoniacal possession was held to be the true explanation of epilepsy, and the proof of the theory was the existence of the disease. But the disease remains, it is the explanation that has disappeared. Mankind is always dealing with the same things, it is the point of view from which they are studied that undergoes change.

And it is certainly strange, if there did really exist a strong desire for a future life, that mankind in general should to-day be so little concerned about it, and should be still less anxious to realize it. In their normal movements men and women show but little interest in the question of survival. In social circles it is voted bad form to dwell upon it, and a discussion on death and immortality would be a wet blanket in most gatherings. There are thousands of preachers who during their professional hours harp upon the overwhelming importance of a future life. Yet the people to whom they preach show no greater interest in it than those who do not believe, and in the presence of death show no more fortitude and display no less grief than do those who have ceased to believe. Even the preachers themselves are driven to admit that their followers live far more for the things of time than for those of eternity. To rouse a fervid state of mind concerning a future life something startling is needed, or a morbid love of the mysterious must be excited, or

one must be shaken out of his normal condition by a great and overwhelming misfortune. Normally man does not act as though he is longing for a future life. He is content, rightly and healthily content, with this one.

Now if there existed a strong, a real desire for a future life this condition of things would be impossible. During the war we know that all were anxious to get news from the front because of the eagerness with which it was received and the efforts made to get it. And in other directions we are able to gauge the strength of a desire by the efforts made to gratify it. We know, for example, that men desire wealth, power, position, fame, because we find them suffering all sorts of dangers and expending considerable energy in getting these things. But we do not find men and women in any considerable number doing anything whatever either to satisfy themselves that another world exists or making the least effort to realize it. The news of the discovery of a new goldfield would send thousands hurrying to take advantage of the find. The announcement of a new argument for immortality would leave most people quite cold. They are content to express an easy-going assent to the veracity of the belief, but it is never made the ground of applied effort or deliberate and sustained action—or if such instances do occur, believers are the first to allege that a want of mental balance is the cause of so unusual a phenomenon.

But in the presence of a genuine desire for another life this state of things would be impossible. There would be the same eagerness to secure its gratification that one witnesses in connection with other strong con-

victions or imperative desires. And in that case life here would tend to become what the earlier and more honest theologians called it, a burden, and we should receive the call to another world with the same gladness that we receive the news of an appointment to a much sought for position. But this is clearly not the case. Our anticipated elevation to another world is not regarded as a blessing, but as a disaster. If one tells the most fervent believer that he is going "home" he receives the news with anything but a look of relief, and his first thought afterwards is not to make his peace with heaven but to call on the doctor in the hopes of delaying his departure. And even the clergy nowadays resent the imputation that their chief task is to prepare their flocks for another life. Practically, they say that the next world will take care of itself. Their aim, they say, is to teach people to live well in this world. Laity and clergy thus give the lie to the existence of any strong desire for a life beyond the grave. They act upon the principle that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush—particularly when one can't see the bush.[1]

Another and a very pertinent comment on the

[1] "Even those surest of heaven stay here to the last possible moment, even though their lives in this world be miserable. Does not this show that the post-mortem life is a convention, a dream-wish? If we were told of a continent of fabulous health and charm, and believed it all, we should go to it by individuals, families, tribes, and leave the fatherland untenanted, although we had to brave dark and tempestous seas to get there. We should not ritually pray against a sudden transit, or be called fanatics if we voluntarily crossed the tide because the old world had become intolerably hard for us." —Professor Stanley Hall. Cited by Professor Leuba, *The Belief in God and Immortality*, p. 304.

assertion that the desire for immortality is a characteristic of human nature in its normal aspects, is found in the existence of such a philosophy as Buddhism. Here we have a creed that is accepted by several hundreds of millions of people, and with whom, instead of personal immortality being one of their expressed desires, the teaching is that it is a curse rather than a blessing. The mere existence of a system such as Buddhism is enough to prove that the attachment of the Christian to the theory of the permanence of individuality, even when it is a genuine expression of feeling, is no more than a consequence of an education that has been going on for generations. But for the main part it is not genuine. It is no more than the repetition of a phrase which owes its currency to existence in a particular social environment.

But there is a very valid reason for the fact that the desire for a future life should never assume a very strong or overpowering form. The whole course of evolution is against it. In the first place it must be borne in mind that all development in the animal world, whether it be of structure or function, takes place in relation to a definite environment. In fact, one may say that the environment and the organism are so interwoven that they are little more than two aspects of the same thing. A feeling, or an instinct must, therefore, hold some relation to an environment with which the organism is in contact, it simply cannot be developed with regard to an environment with which the organism has no relation whatever. And whatever future is implied in animal development it must be in relation to one that exists this side of the grave, not in relation to some future of which

members of the species have no experience. Every instinct that is developed, whether of play or the parental instinct, or of self-preservation, has sole reference to the environment of which the species has already had experience. This is equally true of what may be called fundamental desires. They are all based upon racial experience, and the promise of their gratification is given in this life, not in some fancied other state of existence.

Moreover, as some degree of utility is a condition of development, whether we are dealing with structures or with feelings, it is certain that no instinct or desire can develop to the point of becoming a racial danger. And a race of people to whom death was an ever present object of contemplation, and with whom there existed a strong desire for a future life, would be handicapped in the struggle for existence. Death would not only loom larger than life, it would become, as Christian theology has so often taught, an all-important consideration, dwarfing everything else, and leaving man, if not nerveless, at least careless in the face of the calls of every-day life.

One may sum it up by saying that it is not the significance of death and the hereafter that is of consequence, but a feeling of the profound importance of the present and its possibilities. And in the face of these possibilities even death must become of subsidiary importance. That is, indeed, the lesson of all heroic lives, the profound conviction that in face of the needs of this life, of the possibilities of development which it offers, there are times when even personal existence must be sacrificed. But the heroic exists, not in virtue of the effect of conduct in deter-

mining our condition in some future state of existence, but in its bearing upon the social life of the race.

It is, of course, possible to see in the lives of individuals illustrations of an extreme obsession with a future state of existence, and in individual cases society can put up with almost any degree of abnormality. We see this illustrated in the case of insanity and of pronounced disease. But while society may be able to afford these things as expressions of individual peculiarity, no society could exist if they were to become normal. In the long run the feelings that are paramount, the tastes that direct human desire, the motives that urge to action, must be of a kind that is consonant with the well-being of the social structure. And the net result of all this has been that, while there has been, on the one hand, a literary and theological tradition of the overwhelming importance of a future life, there are few things about which men and women have bothered less, and there are few beliefs the disappearance of which would affect our lives less. It has been a fight between life and theory. On the one hand the religious endeavour has been to develop in man a strong desire for a future life. On the other hand both natural and social selection have worked so as to keep this desire weak and fitful in the interests of the species. The thought of death, it is true, can never be suppressed, and we shall see in a future chapter that it is well it should not be. But while death is always in evidence, the development of our feelings concerning it is ultimately governed by the exigencies of life.

That the desire for a future state of existence may not be anything like so strong as our theological

teachers would have us believe is a reflection that sometimes dawns upon the advocates of immortality. Thus, in a small work, *The Immortal Hope*, Dr. S. H. Mellone remarks: "It is possible that inquiries made systematically among intelligent people might suggest that the strength of the desire for another life is over-rated, that a vast number do not care, while many would prefer annihilation" (p. 5). That really exact inquiry and honest replies would show this I for one do not doubt for a moment. The difficulty is to get people either to analyse their own mental states with sufficient detachment and knowledge to make their replies of value, or to answer openly a question in connection with which any reply other than a particular one involves a certain amount of social discomfort. Where enquiries have been conducted the results have never been favourable to the traditional view, and have often been directly against it. Thus, in an exhaustive enquiry conducted in the United States by Professor Leuba it was found that less than half of those questioned professed a desire for immortality, and even then no notice was taken of how far the replies were due to a misunderstanding or a misinterpretation of normal feelings, and which a truly scientific psychology would explain in a very different manner. And it is just this habit of interpreting feelings in terms of current teaching that plays into the hands of the purveyors of superstition.

So, again, we have Dr. Osler, in the course of his Ingersoll lecture on "Science and Immortality," affirming that "the desire for immortality seems never to have had a very strong hold upon mankind," and that "practical indifference is the modern attitude of

mind." Even the popular superstition that the desire for immortality grows keener as man nears death he declares to be "erroneous," and adds:—

> I have careful records of about 500 death beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pains or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no signs one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting. The preacher was right; in this respect man hath no pre-eminence over the beast, "as the one dieth, so dieth the other."

Substantially the same conclusion might be reached by anyone who cared to collect cases of actual experiences instead of repeating, parrot-like, the age-long falsities of the pulpit.

Mention was made above of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of normal feelings. And that leads me to what I regard as the heart of the question. For when it is said that men do not really desire a future life it is not meant that an assertion to the contrary is not honestly enough made in a large number of cases. But is there any stronger reason why we should take as final a man's account of the nature of his own feelings than there is that we should accept his account of the nature of an organic complaint? In my opinion there is not the slightest justification for our so doing. All we are warranted in saying is that there is some desire present, but whether it is of the nature described is quite another question. There is often a world of difference between description and analysis.

I believe the correct account of the nature of this alleged desire for a future life was given by Professor Metchnikoff in his suggestive work *The Nature of Man*. He there puts the question, Why is it, seeing that all men must die, there has not been an instinct developed in relation to so universal and so inescapable a fact as death, as instincts have been developed in relation to other normal and universal happenings? In other cases, where a particular phase of existence is uniformly experienced, there is developed in the organism some kind of a reactive preparation for it. Thus, there is with man the gregarious instinct which fits him for associated life, there is the play instinct which prepares him for the real life of maturity, there is the sex instinct which expresses itself as the young human being approaches adolescence. But in the case of death, which meets every one sooner or later, there is no such preparation, save in an insignificant number of cases. Why is this? Why is man so ill prepared to meet a fact which he cannot for ever avoid? Why, to put the matter in another way, has not man an instinct for death as he has an instinct for life, so that on the approach of death he should be organically prepared for it in the same way that he is organically prepared for the other main crises of his existence? Of course, we may have here no more than another case of disharmony between man and his environment, but it is in the light of this mal-adaptation that we must look for an explanation of that clinging to life which is seized upon by the religionist as proof of man's desire for a future life.

We may commence with the fact that there is an obvious desire for life with all normal animal forms.

To explain this we need go no further than the struggle for existence, for in the absence of a more or less developed "will to live" a species of animals would soon disappear before its more virile competitors. The desire for life, or in its negative aspect, an avoidance of death, is thus no more than one of the conditions of existence. To say that a species of animals persists, and to say that it has a desire for life, are only two ways of expressing the same fact.

Again, we may say, rather as a rough and ready way of inducing a mental picture than as an exact description of what is the case, that every human being starts life with a certain physiological impetus, or, what amounts to the same thing, with the capacity for generating a physiological energy that will serve to preserve life, the psychological side of which is the desire to live. If, now, we assume that the life of each organism flowed on so regularly and so smoothly that death came only when the physiological capacity of the organism was wholly and completely exhausted, there would be a corresponding exhaustion of the psychological expression also. We may assume, I think, that something like this occurs periodically in sleep, where the temporary exhaustion of the powers of the organism induces a desired unconsciousness. And there seems little reason for doubting that if we were to live in such a way that death came only when the physiological strength of the body was completely exhausted, we should die as we sleep, not with a sense of losing something that we desire to retain, but with a complete readiness for rest. We should no longer have the desire for life, because we should have lost the motive power which gave that desire its being. In a

few cases that does occur now, but the vast majority of deaths happen in different circumstances.

We die, as Metchnikoff points out, deaths of disease. Our deaths are deaths of violence, or of disease—which is only violence in another form. Our deaths are due to the breakdown of parts of the organism, which throws the whole of the structure out of gear. Death takes place while the physiological vitality of parts of the organism is still strong, and while its psychological equivalent, the instinct for life, is strong also. We shrink from death because we have not yet exhausted the desire for life. The desire for more life is the cry of the organism to spend its still unexhausted capacities for living, What we have here is, not a phenomenon that requires a transcendental explanation, but one which may be fully accounted for in terms of the known qualities and capacities of the human structure.

In a later chapter we shall have to deal with the conditions that give even death its compensating features. At present we are concerned with the way in which it is made to bolster up a supposed desire for a life beyond the grave.

From what has been said it is clear that the real question with which we have to deal is the existence of a desire for life here. But what the theologian says, in substance, is " You desire to live, but that you cannot live longer here is evidence that you will live elsewhere." And that conclusion is not only without proof, it is also absolutely irrelevant. The proof of this is that if those with the desire for life could go on living here there is not one of them who would wish to live anywhere else. There is no desire for a

future life, there is only a desire for continued life. There is a shrinking from non-existence, partly because of the causes already dealt with, partly because it is easier to think of oneself continuing to exist than it is to think of one passing out of existence. But the desire to live has, so to speak, no fixed form. It is fluid, and may assume any form that is prompted by environmental circumstances. And it is on this fact that the theologian builds. Just as in the one case the fullest life spells military glory, to another political or literary renown, so the religious advocate seizes hold of the formless desire for life and explains and exploits it as a desire for a life beyond the grave. One might as reasonably argue that because a man dies with a desire for wealth ungratified, therefore there will be another world in which he will possess fabulous riches.

Analysis thus explains both the persistence of the doctrine of survival and its failure to exert a commanding influence on life. It has been persistent because there have always been the facts of death and the desire for life on which it might build its mistaken interpretation. But it has failed to impress people with a sense of its paramount importance because human feelings are of necessity developed with reference to the present life and to the present life alone. Otherwise, racial suicide would have been accomplished long ago. And thus while in theory the religious interpretation has been generally accepted, social forces have effectually prevented its exercising a decisive influence on life. Life is, in the long run, too strong for religion. And one of the conditions of the survival of any theory is that however harmful it

may be, its harmfulness in practice must not exceed the point at which it threatens the existence of social life. Otherwise, there is an end to both the theory and to those who uphold it.

Finally, suppose one were to grant that there did really exist a genuine desire for a life beyond the grave. Would that, of necessity, carry with it even a reasonable presumption in favour of immortality? The existence of a desire proves only—that a desire exists. There is no warranty whatever for assuming that its existence is a guarantee that one day the desire will be gratified. All sorts of things are desired by all sorts of people without their being realized in fact. One man desires an income of £1,000 a year but never gets more than a couple of pounds a week. Another desires fame and dies unknown. Another desires a wife and family and dies a bachelor. Nearly all desire to reach a good old age, yet the average duration of life stands somewhere in the neighbourhood of forty years. Illustrations to the same end might be multiplied, but if our desires are not gratified in every direction is there any justification for assuming that they will be gratified in any? If the desire to reach seventy years of age is no surety that we shall not die at thirty, why should we assume that a desire to live for ever proves that death is no more than a passage from one room to another? The existence of desire may be of value as an indication to past conditions of life, or of past education, but it is of very doubtful guidance as to what will happen even in the future of this world, and of no value whatever in regard to some presumed other state of existence.

CHAPTER III.

THE APPEAL TO FACTS.

In the last chapter we were concerned with an examination of the alleged desire for a future life and an analysis of its meaning and value. The conclusion reached was that the plea owed its force entirely to the fact that men and women were in the habit of taking current phrases at their face value, without ever trying to get a clear conception of what was meant by the expressions used, or whether they had a meaning at all. In the present chapter we can carry that method of procedure a step further, and with profit. For it is tolerably certain that if people were in the habit of asking themselves, "What exactly do I mean by immortality?" it would be seen that to assert survival beyond death is to say that which is incapable of proof, and a bringing together of terms that are mutually destructive.

It is, for example, easy enough to say that twice two are five, and just as easy to say that one believes in the sum. But this is only for so long as we refrain from asking just what is meant by the statement. To assert the existence of a belief, and to have a belief are not of necessity identical propositions. And I think it can be shown that the belief in immortality is one that would stand condemned by its own weakness if we all were to ask what precisely is meant by it. That there may be truths with which we are unacquainted is likely enough, but there cannot well be truths that are in direct contradiction to what we know to be true,

and the terms of which cannot be brought together in consciousness.

Now what is it that ought to be meant when we speak of personal immortality as a fact? It will not do to say we mean that in some way or another, and in some form or another, we persist. In some form or other everything persists. That is a postulate of the most rigid determinism, and is accepted by the most uncompromising materialism. Besides, a changed form of *me* is not me at all; it is someone or something else. John Smith with a new set of bodily and mental characteristics is no more the original John Smith than a baked pudding is the same as a boiled one because the cook uses the same ingredients. To every one of us a given individual is primarily a particular set of bodily and mental peculiarities, and, therefore, his survival beyond death means the persistence of the individual as we know him. If I am not the same after death as I was before, then it is not I who persists, but someone or something else. Consequently, we may lay it down as a settled proposition that survival after death means the survival of the individual with all those physical and other peculiarities in virtue of which we know him as an individual.

Not only does the conception of immortality involve this, but the popular and emotional pleas for a future life imply it. If we do not live again as we are now the talk of meeting our loved ones beyond the grave is so much verbiage. We should not know them even if we met them. The husband who is looking forward to meeting his wife, or the parent the child, must all be expecting the same bodily form manifesting the same qualities of mind and character that they

knew and loved this side of the grave. Nothing else will do. To offer them anything different would be like expecting a mother who had lost a child to be content with a free pick from an orphan asylum. To be real the individual must exist on the other side of the grave as he existed here. That is what we ought to believe; but I think it can be shown that we can assert that we do believe this only so long as we refrain from bringing together in our minds the various terms of the proposition.

The moment we raise the issue in this clear and unambiguous way the unintelligibility of the belief begins to emerge. When we speak of man as an individual, what do we mean? Primarily, man is known to us as an organism manifesting certain qualities or discharging certain functions. That he is more than this is certainly no more than an inference, and it may be a wholly unwarrantable assumption. But it is quite certain that, if we clear from our minds the conception of man as an organism possessing certain qualities and functions, what we have left is a complete blank. Mind *may* be more than a function of the organism, but it is quite certain that we only know it as such. Nor can we think of it as otherwise. Indeed, to think of a function in the absence of an organ is a sheer impossibility. A quality must belong to something, as wetness is a quality of something that is wet, or warmth of something that is hot. We assert that "Man survives death" much as we might repeat the formula in the Athanasian Creed about the three incomprehensibles, and we persuade ourselves that we really believe because we never ask ourselves what on earth we mean by it.

The survival of personality becomes the more unthinkable when we realize that it is, so to speak, not a constant but a variable. Personality is not something with which we start life, and which remains unchanged throughout our existence. It has none of the characteristics of immutable constancy. It is something that is slowly built up, and may be even more rapidly pulled down, and which is always undergoing a process of modification more or less drastic. Strictly speaking a man in the course of his life manifests many personalities. There is that of the child, of maturity, and of old age. Which personality is it that survives death and which are we to meet again on the other side of the grave? And why should one survive rather than another? And if all do not survive, why should any? What better claim for survival has one of the personalities over the others? If it is because it is the last that one of them survives, then it would seem that if we want the next world to be peopled by young and healthy people it would be well to return to the practice of some savages and kill our people before they get old and sick. And if it be that only one of these personalities survives, then the destruction of personality is a fact, and all the arguments against it break down.

There are many other reasons that are equally decisive against the survival of personality, but for the moment I am testing this idea from the point of view of intelligibility and trying to show that it really belongs to the by no means small class that owe their strength to the fact that men repeat strings of words and mistake them for definite ideas. It is like those formulæ of magic that had so great a vogue in the

Middle Ages and which owed their power to the fact that no one knew what they meant.

I shall have to return to this subject of personality later, when discussing the subject of Spiritualism and the nature of the "Self." It is only necessary to say here that the sense of "self" presents no mystery and no hopeless problem to the informed mind. We can, if we will, see both the creation and the destruction of the "self." What sense of "self" has a newly born child? So far as we can see, none at all. Even the knowledge of its having a body appears to be in the nature of a discovery. The sense of touch—the mother-sense—is probably the starting point here, and with growth the notion of a physical self is gradually elaborated. On the mental side there is a corresponding development. Experience of mother, home, playmates, the larger experience of the social world, all contribute to the building up of a distinct personality. The self, the ego, is not something that is simple and indecomposable, it is something that is complex, multiple, and decomposable. And this building up of experiences which on the psychological side gives us the sense of personality, has its analogue on the biological side. For the life of the organism is also multiple. It is built up from the myriads of cells and their lives which go to make up the life of the entire organism. In a rough and ready way we may say that the cell is to the individual as the individual is to the nation. Individual and nation represent the total of the constituent parts, plus what is given by the fact of their combination. But eliminate the individuals and what becomes of the nation? Destroy the life of the cells and what becomes of their product, the

individual life? Is it not quite as rational to talk of national life persisting in the absence of individuals as it is to think of human life persisting after the cells which comprise the organism have been destroyed.

There is one other point that is worth noting in this connection. We know that each human being commences his or her existence as a consequence of the union of two minute particles of living matter. At what point of this union are we to conceive the beginning of an immortal soul? If at the moment of junction, then we must assume that the soul is a product of the union. If not then, at what subsequent stage are we to assume its beginnings? The difficulty does not end here. We know that man is only one figure in a lengthy sum of animal existence. And where in that immense chain are we to draw the line? If man is immortal why not the animals that are near him in the scale? And if these are immortal, what is to prevent us going lower still, carry it down to the very simplest form of animated existence and claim immortality for the amœba? But that is not all. Weismann pointed out that the single celled organisms do really possess a physical immortality. Short of an accident they do not die. They simply divide into two distinct organisms each of which goes through the same process. And if we assume that the single celled organism possessed a single soul, so soon as it splits up into two, are there two "souls" existing where before there was only one? If so, we can by this method multiply soul as a consequence of simple division. As some one has suggested, we can increase the number of immortal souls by cutting up a jelly-fish.

The more closely we analyse this conception of

survival beyond death the more unintelligible it becomes. The individual is, as we have said, the sum of his organic activities, and it is not denied that these activities are absolutely dependent upon specific organic structures. Thus, we all admit that vision is dependent upon the structure of the eye, hearing upon the existence of auditory organs, and the same principle holds of every function and sense, including the great mother sense of feeling. It will not be denied that if the eye is destroyed the capacity for vision goes, or if certain nerve centres are destroyed that the sense of touch is destroyed. We may, that is, destroy one sense after another; and yet, we are asked to believe that if instead of destroying the individual in this piecemeal fashion we blast him out of existence with a charge of melinite or some other explosive he will exist somewhere else with all his faculties unimpaired. Nay, better than unimpaired, for the fact of his being without organs for the manifestations of functions will in some quite non-understandable manner make those functions stronger and more perfect than ever. Anything more absurd it would be impossible to conceive.

I do not think, then, that one is putting the case too strongly in saying that the belief in immortality owes its currency to the fact that either people do not realize the unintelligible character of the proposition laid down, or they lack the knowledge that would make it unintelligible. To make my meaning clear I may take an illustration from the law of gravitation. So long as one thinks of gravitation as a force that merely pulls downwards, the proposition that the same force which holds people on the earth here must be pushing them off the earth at the Antipodes is rational. But when

we realize that the proper conception of gravitation is that of a force pulling toward a centre, the proposition becomes at once unthinkable. So with the matter now before us. The conception of survival beyond death we know to have been born at a time when man was quite unacquainted with the nature of the organism and of its functions. At that time the conception of something inhabiting the body and forsaking it at death to take up its abode elsewhere was quite an intelligible one. But what is intelligible at one stage of culture becomes unintelligible at another stage. And when in the light of the knowledge of to-day we bear in mind all that is implied in this conception of life after death, we find that we are faced with nothing more than a series of mutually destructive propositions. We cannot think of the organism existing in another world without assuming that the same conditions that exist here exist there, and then must dismiss from our minds the knowledge that the disintegration of the physical body is absolutely complete. We cannot think of the functions of an organism existing in the absence of the organism because that outrages all that we know of fact. And we cannot think of the survival of personality, as a psychological fact, once we realize the nature of personality, with all its permutations, cancellations, buildings, and rebuildings. At every point the conception of survival beyond death receives a check from the knowledge that we actually possess. It can be retained only on the condition that we narcotize ourselves with words and close our minds to some of the most easily ascertained facts of scientific investigation.

CHAPTER IV.

SOUL OR MIND?

WHAT are the facts, or the alleged facts, upon which, to the modern mind, the theory of survival is supposed to rest? This is an all-important question, and its discussion in connection with most questions would exhaust the subject. But the difficulty here is that the real reasons and the alleged ones do not coincide. The alleged foundations of the belief in immortality have no basis in fact, the real ones are such that no civilized intelligence would tolerate them for a moment. And of even the avowed reasons it may be said that they owe their force to the persistence below consciousness of forms of thought that are disowned the moment they appear above the surface. It is for this reason that the informed critic—one who never loses sight of the origin and history of the belief—can never quite get rid of a feeling of unreality about the whole performance. He is never in open contact with the real grounds of the belief, and yet he knows all the time that it is these suppressed grounds which give the conviction whatever vitality it has. The expressed reasons given for the belief are no more than excuses for its retention. They carry as much conviction as does the politician thirsting for power orating eloquently on his devotion to the welfare of the country, but with his mind bent on personal or party

advancement. Religion is a veritable playground of ghosts, and when it is not a ghost raised to the rank of a god it is the ghost of a superstition endowed with the dignity of a logical proposition.

What is the basic assumption made by believers in man's survival beyond death? Bishop Butler, living at a time when the scientific case against immortality was far less complete than it is to-day, put the issue plainly when he said that every argument for the immortality of man proceeded on the assumption that the mind was independent of the body. And this perfectly plain statement receives endorsement in a statement made by Dr. W. Brown in a recent course of lectures delivered on behalf of the doctrine we are combating.[1] Both give a plain statement of the fundamental issue, for with every belief in survival there is the necessary assumption that man is a duality. There is the body and there is something else—soul, spirit, mind—and it is this something else that is the real person. It uses the body for a certain period and at death dispenses with it. So far the statement of the case is quite clear. But scientific knowledge has grown greatly since Butler's day, and one consequence of this has been to drive believers into more obscure and more roundabout statements of their primary conviction. It is, at all events, quite certain that nothing worthy of being called proof has been brought forward. A century and a half of intense scientific activity has entirely failed to discover a single fact or to give the

[1] "If we believe that the mind comes to an end when the body ceases to exist, then the question of immortality is settled—there can be no immortality." (King's College Lectures on *Immortality*, p. 126.)

least scrap of positive evidence in favour of the dualistic theory. There are a host of assumptions, a number of ingenious theories, many forced and uncorroborated explanations of obscure mental phenomena, but no more. The theory of a future life remains now as ever, a vague hope, an unprovable speculation, a useless hypothesis. It explains nothing, and it introduces a number of new and gratuitous difficulties.

It is not alone that there are no reliable facts which can be offered in defence of the belief of the mind's independence of the body. Such facts as we have in our possession and to which we can make the most confident appeal are dead against such an assumption. It may safely be said that of mind as an independent force no one has either knowledge or conception. If one tries to think of mind, not as being associated with some organic structure, but as being apart from it, he will soon realize that he has set himself an impossible task. The dependence of mind on body is clear. It is affected by bodily states, by changes in temperature, by the food we eat, by the air we breathe, by the efficiency of the secretory organs. Mind, as associated with a nervous structure, we can conceive; mind, as distinct from it, we cannot think of at all. The formula " No psychosis without neurosis " is accepted as a working maxim in all science, and is only putting into technical language the common experience of all. In the phenomena which is presented to us in cases of insanity, in the study of the brain in health and disease, in noting the effects of drugs on the mental functions, in our knowledge that there is a relation, not exactly determined, but still a relation, between brain

weight and brain structure and the manifestations of intelligence, we have all the conditions that inevitably suggest a relation of cause and effect. And in no direction but in this one would that inference be for a moment challenged.

Science is therefore telling us nothing new or strange when it says that mental phenomena depend upon the brain and the nervous system. It is only saying what we all know, and stating an assumption upon which we all act. For no educated person acts as though he really believes the mind to be independent of the body. And there is not a medical man in the kingdom who ever treats mental ailments from any other standpoint than that of the deranged functions of a definite nervous structure. In health and disease the connection between mind and body is of the closest, and, so far as can be seen, is of an inseparable character.

The piling up of authorities is a poor enough game, but if one were inclined to indulge in it at length one might compile a volume of opinions of leading authorities in support of what has just been said. I will content myself with two or three. Thus we have Dr. Mellone—a believer in immortality—admitting that "Modern psychology has nothing to contribute in favour of the belief in survival.....Psychology has effectually disposed of the conception of the soul and body as two separable things" (*The Immortal Hope*, p. 47).

Professor Münsterberg says:—

> The philosopher who bases the hope of immortality on a theory of brain functions.....seems to me on the same ground with the astronomer who seeks with his

telescope for a place in the universe where no space exists, and where there would thus be undisturbed room for God and the eternal bodiless souls (*Psychology and Life*, p. 91).

The great Dr. Osler, in the course of a lecture on "Science and Immortality" says, "Modern psychological science dispenses altogether with the theory of the soul," and, finally, Professor William James, in the act of saying all that may be said on behalf of the belief in survival, adds:—

> It is indeed true that physiological science has come to the conclusion cited (that our conscious life is a function of cerebral convolutions) and we must confess that in so doing she has only carried out a little further the common belief of mankind. Every one knows that arrests of brain development occasion imbecility, that blows on the head abolish memory or consciousness, and that brain stimulants and poisons change the quality of our ideas. The anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists have only shown this generally admitted fact of a dependence to be detailed and minute. What the laboratories and hospitals have lately been teaching us is not only that thought in general is one of the brain's functions, but that the various special portions of thinking are functions of special portions of the brain. When we are thinking of things seen it is our occipital convolutions that are active; when of things heard it is a certain portion of our temporal lobes; when of things to be spoken, it is one of our frontal convolutions.....Such special opinions may have to be corrected; yet, so firmly established do the main positions worked out by the anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists of the brain appear, that the youth

of our medical schools are everywhere taught unhesitatingly to believe them. The assurance that observation will go to establish them even more minutely is the inspirer of all contemporary research (*Human Immortality*, pp. 19-22).

Professor James might have added, quite in line with his own favourite philosophy, that no other theory works, and this one does. The theory of the independence of the mind explains nothing, and using the word "soul" as an explanatory term is a mere verbal trick. It belongs to that sort of philosophizing whose great merit is, to use the words of Shadworth Hodgson, "Whatever you are totally ignorant of assert to be the explanation of everything else."

Against the theory that mind stands to structure in the relation of function to organ, it is urged that we know of no means by which neural action can become transformed into thought. The two things, it is said, are incommensurable; they belong to two different orders of existence, and by no known means can we see how one can give rise to the other. This is not the best way of stating the issue, but, if it were, the objection would still be inconclusive. It assumes that our present alleged ignorance of the connection must remain permanent. It is also making our want of knowledge the measure of possibility. And that is always a dangerous policy to adopt. The frontiers of human knowledge are always extending, and problems that appear hopeless to one generation are apt to figure as settled questions in the text-books of a later one.

There are, in this connection, only three conceivable hypotheses on which we can work. We may assume that neural action is the cause of thought, or

that thought is the cause of neural action, or that the two are so related that a particular kind of neural motion is always accompanied by mental phenomena without the two being causally connected. The last hypothesis once enjoyed a certain popularity, but it is now so generally discarded that it may safely be dismissed, and we are thus left to deal with the first two.

And first, by way of preliminary, it may be noted that whatever difficulty there is in accepting mind as a function of neural activity holds with equal strength against the theory championed by the believer in survival. If we are warranted in rejecting the functional theory of mind because we cannot see the connection between brain action and thought, we are clearly prohibited from accepting mind as the cause of brain action, and for the same reason. If, as we have been so often assured, there is really an "unfathomable abyss," a "bridgeless gulf" between the two, the gulf remains whether we are standing on this side or on that. You cannot walk across a bridgeless gulf by the easy expedient of attempting the passage from the other side. You cannot in reason reject a causal connection between matter and mind on the ground of their belonging to different categories, and then turn round and affirm it between mind and matter. To deny a connection for the purpose of refuting materialism and then to affirm it for the purpose of establishing spiritualism is nonsense. If there really is a gap between the facts, and not in our knowledge of them, the gap remains from whichever side we approach. And thus the very nature of the criticism which is directed against the Materialist effectually disposes of the Spiritualist. The latter cuts down a bridge with

elaborate ostentation, and then professes ability to walk across the chasm as though the bridge still remained in position.

What is really at issue in this question of the connection of mind and structure is the precise meaning which we attach, or ought to attach, to "function." When we say that A is a function of B what is it that we ought to mean? It will be well to take a simple illustration by way of answer. The prime function of a muscle is contractility under stimuli. It is this function that is manifested when the hand grasps an object. But the constituent parts of a muscle are cells and cell fibres, and if the cells are examined separately all they exhibit is the normal irritability of cells in general. It is their combination and organization that gives us the phenomenon of contraction. We cannot have muscular action in the absence of cells, but it is the peculiar combination of specially developed cells that gives specific muscular phenomena.

So far, the position is quite clear. Now if we try to separate the "function" from the structure of which it is the expression we soon find that we are attempting an impossibility. The two things are inseparable, and the absence of one involves the absence of the other. Or, if we advance to a more subjective view and ask why certain movements should result in the flexing of a muscle, the only answer is that the one accompanies the other. And if it were possible to push the investigation back a stage and to show how muscular action arises from certain properties of the cell, we should have added nothing material to the discussion. Ultimately, we only know the qualities or properties of a thing by observing what it does. And we express

the result of our observations when we say that A is a function of B. The function of a thing is what it does. If we keep that consideration clearly before us much of the confusion that surrounds the subject will soon disappear.

Biologically, then, a function is actually the activity of an organ or of a group of organs. Whether we are dealing with muscle and contractility, with brain and thought, or organism and life, does not in the least matter. We have the structure and we have its activities, that is, its functions. And so far as one can see, certainly for aught that anyone *knows* to the contrary, life and thought are functions of a certain specialized organization. To say that they are more than this is, in the present state of knowledge, pure assumption, and those who make the assumption are logically bound to justify it. It will not do for them to make the statement and then defy others to prove that it is false. To tell us that no trace of life can be found in the bases of organic structures, and no trace of mind in certain organs, is only to add an absurdity to an empty assertion. Certainly, if one reduces an organ to its parts, or an organism to its organs, one will never find there the properties that were manifested in their combination. For the function is not the expression of the physical and chemical properties of the tissues merely, it is that plus the powers of combination and organization. Except, therefore, for the added complexity there is no greater difficulty, in kind, of seeing how life and thought are the consequences of given organic structures, than there is of seeing how any function is related to its structure. In every case all that we need show is that, given a

particular organ or set of organs a result or results follow. There is no question in science of "why," but only of "how." And that is answered when we have shown all the conditions under which a phenomenon constantly occurs. This is not questioned in most matters. No one doubts that digestion, circulation, etc., are functions of the bodily organism. And there would be no question here were it not thought necessary to find some basis in modern knowledge—or should not one say in modern ignorance?—for the belief in a soul. As usual the religionist is building on our existing ignorance, with an inward prayer that it may never be removed.

It will be seen that much of the confusion attendant upon a discussion of the subject is due to raising the question in the wrong way. People look for the undiscoverable and then complain they cannot find it. In asking "How does neural action become *transformed* into sensation?" or "How does the brain *produce* thought?" we are stating the issue wrongly, and so paving the way for further confusion. Two things are separated in thought that are inseparable in fact, and are then treated as distinct existences. If used with the necessary qualifications the separation is both permissible and useful, but to lose sight of these qualifications is fatal to exact thinking. For the only sense in which the once famous "the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile" is true is that as in the absence of the liver there is no bile, so in the absence of the brain there is no thought. But production suggests separation, and it is here that the confusion commences. It is said, for example, that neural action and thought cannot stand together as

cause and effect because one can trace the complete circuit of a given series from the excitation of a peripheral nerve on to the discharge that occurs in the brain cells, and then follow a corresponding return series ending in action. These are complete in themselves, and how can we assert mind or consciousness to be a link in the series when we see that the series is complete in its absence? Yet mind is there. On that point there is no dispute. But how is it possible to connect the two things if there is no point at which the connection can be made?

If we are really looking at two sets of separable facts, the one physical and the other mental, the case of the vitalist seems unanswerable. But is that really the case? Are we not, in allowing the vitalist to raise the issue in this way, allowing him to assume in the beginning all that he wants in the end? But suppose that instead of using language which implies the existence of two distinct things, we regard the bodily and the mental phases as two sides of the same thing. We shall then be describing all that we are certain occurs, we simplify the whole matter, and we are able to see our way more clearly. All the confusing talk as to the brain producing thought disappears and we are left with what is really the essential problem, that of determining the conditions under which a particular phenomenon occurs.

The cardinal fact here is that we are dealing with a phenomenon which may be adequately described from either of two standpoints. What under one set of conditions may be viewed as brain action or molecular motion may be viewed under other conditions as thought, and whether we describe what occurs in one

set of terms or the other entirely depends upon ourselves. Thus, an aerial wave striking the retina may be described in terms of a series of nervous shocks or in terms of colour. In the one case we have a problem in psychology, in the other in physics. But the two descriptions do not, obviously, refer to two different things, but to the same thing described from an objective or from a subjective point of view. We have the same thing illustrated in the fact that a series of vibratory shocks may be described in terms of heat, sound, or light. There is a reality of difference without there being a differentiation of existence. It is true that we cannot see why motion should produce thought, but it is equally true that we cannot see why thought should produce motion. And that is because we are all the time looking for the impossible. But we can see that the same thing under different conditions may present different aspects. The psychic fact is not merely the equivalent of the physical one, it is the same fact viewed now objectively and now subjectively. Our mistake lies in first separating in thought two things that are not separate in fact, and then forgetting that the distinction is one that we have made purely for our own convenience.

Here, as in so many other cases, confused language, if not the product of confused thinking, sooner or later leads to it. Owing to the way the question is phrased the real issue never stands clearly before the mind. And in this particular instance we have the added confusion which results from the persistence of primitive conceptions of the nature of man. With the origin of the belief we will deal later, at present it is enough to say that there is not the slightest doubt to-day of the

way in which this belief in the duality of man began. And in the development of a more scientific mode of thinking there has been, not merely the fight of an established opinion to perpetuate itself, but the important fact that while our best thinking reaches out beyond the present, the language in which we seek to express ideas was coined for the expression of thoughts of a wholly different variety. We say one thing, we mean one thing, but the implications of our language are often vastly different. In many ways we use the language of savagery to express the findings of science, and in his resistance to new ideas this gives the savage in us a tremendous advantage.

It is for this reason, principally, that I have dwelt upon the importance of stating the question at issue in a way that should be as free as possible from ambiguity. "What do I mean?" is always a question of importance, and "What ought I to mean?" is hardly less so. And in this instance we certainly ought not to set out with such questions as "How does the brain produce thought?" or "How are life and organization united?" That is simply allowing one's opponent so to state the case that he has gone a long way towards securing victory before the battle begins. That life is never found apart from organization or thought apart from brain are facts. And it is not our duty to show the Spiritualist how they are united. It is his to show how they can be separated. We do not know them as separate things. We cannot even think them as separate things. It is for those who say they can be separated to prove it. It is enough for us to take our stand upon observed facts, and to be guided by the inferences they suggest.

Finally, we may note as one of the curiosities of the religious mind that while quite readily accepting theories in support of religion that have not the slightest evidence in their favour, it demands the most complete and the most absolute demonstration of the truth of any theory that may be offered on the opposite side. The demand just dealt with is a case in point. The theory of an animating soul that is independent of the body is accepted without the slightest evidence being given in its favour. The most absolute proof is demanded before the functional theory of mind is adopted. The Materialist is really not bound to show *how* nervous action gives rise to mental phenomena before he is warranted in taking that as a working hypothesis. It is enough for him that the known facts do not contradict such an assumption. The theory of the Materialist explains much and contradicts nothing. The theory of the soul explains nothing and contradicts much. It is an absurdity invoked to explain a difficulty, and it proceeds to make the difficulty more than ever difficult of solution by creating a cloud of words behind which the believer in survival seeks to perpetuate a belief that owes its origin to the fear and ignorance of the primitive savage.

CHAPTER V.

PROFESSOR JAMES TO THE RESCUE.

In dealing with the relations of mind and body I specially left on one side a theory that has appeared many times during the history of the belief in survival, which still finds many advocates, and was put forward in the name of speculative science by the late Professor William James. In his Ingersoll lecture on "Human Immortality" he replies to the statement that we only know thought as a function of the brain by admitting the fact, but attempts to draw "the fangs of cerebralistic materialism," by offering a different explanation. Function, he says, may be of more than one kind. It may be liberative, as when a spring releases the thing it holds down, or productive, as when it represents the properties of things in combination, or, yet again, it may be transmissive, as when a piece of coloured glass determines the hue of the light that reaches the eye. If the Materialist is right in assuming the function of the brain to be productive, then the belief in survival has no logical weight. But if its function is permissive then we may accept the position that thought is a function of the brain without surrendering our faith in survival.

For, he says, "suppose.....that the whole universe of material things.....should turn out to be a mere surface veil of phenomena hiding and keeping back

the world of genuine realities.....the whole world of natural experience, as we get it, being but a time mask, shattering or refracting the one infinite thought which is the sole reality into those millions of finite streams of consciousness known to us as our private selves," assume all this and admit that our brains are the organs which transmit this reality to our consciousness, then it follows that the destruction of the organism does not affect the existence of this sole reality, it merely destroys its organ of transmission.

It may be granted that one can prove anything provided one also assumes all that is required to effect the proof. And in this case the assumptions of Professor James are sufficiently comprehensive. For, first, we must assume that there is a world of consciousness " behind the veil." Then we must assume that the brain stands in the same relation to this real world as a stained glass window does to the world of light, and that just as the light is individualized as green or red or blue by the glass through which it passes, so the world-soul is individualized by the human organism. Finally, we must assume that the destruction of the individual organism does not at all affect the individualized consciousness, which is equal to assuming that the coloured light which streams on the cathedral floor would continue *after* the window had been broken. If we assume all these things then we can believe that after death consciousness " might in ways unknown to us continue still." With that we can all agree. Assume enough and you can prove anything. Anyone can get the omelette out of the hat—provided he has been careful to place it there before the performance commenced.

There is no need here to examine minutely the different meanings which Professor James gives to the word "function." It is plain that the only reason for elaborating them is the need for finding some sort of a basis for a "world-soul," just as the only reason for assuming a "world-soul" is the need for finding some basis for the belief in survival. For if we ask what are the facts upon which the belief in a world-soul is based, the reply is that there are none. Its sole justification is that if we accept it we can go on believing in the survival of the individual soul, a belief that is everywhere discredited. And, again, we have to note the curious fact that while demanding the most exact demonstration of the neurological theory of mental phenomena, the believer in survival is ready to accept without proof and without question so fantastic a conception as that of a "world-soul." A sea of consciousness "behind the veil," divorced from all the known conditions under which consciousness exists, is a species of rubbish better fitted to the columns of a Sunday newspaper than to the pages of a serious philosophical essay.

But suppose we were to grant this theory of a world-soul. Even then we should be as far off as ever from proving survival, or from making it even intelligible. Survival after death means—it is evidently necessary to emphasize the point—the survival of *individual* consciousness and personality. But how can that happen if all that is *me* owes its *me*ness to the fact that my brain has individualized a certain portion of the world-soul? This bit of the world-soul can only continue to be me so long as the brain remains to give it an individualistic consistency. Destroy the brain and

the individualized portion of the world-soul known as me is once more merged in the " infinite Thought "—whatever that may happen to be. As well talk of the individuality of the raindrop being preserved after it returns to the sea from which it originated. One might as reasonably talk of my body continuing to exist because after death its constituents assume a hundred and one different forms. It is not a question here of whether man is essentially mind or essentially matter. The only point is that if he survives death he must survive as an individual, not as an undifferentiated part of some speculative whole. Those who throw themselves into ecstacies over the reunion of friends in the next world cannot have in mind the reunion of certain unorganized quantities of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus, sodium, etc. It is not the immortality of chemical elements they have in mind, but a perpetuation of individualities. And on that rock Professor James's theory is wrecked hopelessly. For whether the human individuality is the expression of the physical structure, or whether a portion of some world-soul is individualized by the physical structure, it is the animal organism that is the condition of individualization, and with the destruction of the individualizing medium individuality disappears. On either theory it is the body that determines individuality just as the stained glass determines the colour of the rays that fall upon the ground. As the glass individualizes the light, so does the body individualize the world-soul. And as the breaking of the glass puts an end to the coloured rays, so the death of the organism puts an end to personal immortality. We destroy the possibility of survival

as surely on the hypothesis of Professor James as on that of the most rigid materialism.

It is, of course, easy to put forward difficulties and point out that the neurological theory of mind cannot answer every question that is asked. If it could, that would imply that our knowledge was complete, and that one chapter of science was definitely closed beyond the possibility of any enlargement or revision. It is enough if a theory explains the facts so far as it goes and if it does not contradict any known facts. And, at least, this theory covers and explains the facts as no other theory does. Other methods have been tried and found wanting, not because those who tried them were wanting in ability, but simply because of the methods themselves. And it is not without significance that Professor McDougall, in the opening of a work written to champion the existence of a "soul," says of the present attitude of scientific workers:—

It is a matter of common knowledge that science has given its verdict against the soul, has declared that the soul, as a thing, or being, or substance, or mode of existence, or activity, different from, distinguishable from, or in any sense or degree independent of the body is a mere survival from primitive culture, one of the many relics of savage superstition, that obstinately persist among us in defiance of the clear teachings of modern science. The greater part of the philosophic world also, mainly owing to the influence of the natural sciences, has arrived at the same conclusion. In short, it cannot be denied that, as William James told us at Oxford three years ago, "souls are out of fashion."

And if a thing so widely advertised as the soul is going out of fashion, the reasons for its disuse must, indeed, be strong.

At any rate, the truth of the statement is undeniable. One might offer the whole of the science of psychology in evidence. What the Greeks meant by psychology was plain. It was a discourse about the soul. And for many generations it continued to mean that. People wrote elaborate treatises about the soul, and the less they knew about it the more voluminous their writings. Indeed, there is no limit to the number of books that might be written concerning a subject on which nothing is known. In that case one can begin anywhere, and even though it carries with it the disadvantage of ending nowhere, the method allows free scope for that verbal ambiguity which delights the soul of the average theologian. But in the seventeenth century a change set in. Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke between them marked out a saner and a more profitable method of investigation than had hitherto existed. Since the time of these heretics the tendency has been ever growing in the direction of a thoroughly deterministic psychology, a system in which the supernatural should have no place. And to-day one may safely say that there is not a scientific man of repute in the world, no matter what his expressed religious opinions may be, who, when dealing with mental phenomena, does not treat them as the equivalents of neural processes. And so it has come about that while we still retain the name of psychology, we mean by it something quite different from the meaning given to the term by those who first used it. A modern text-book of psychology simply leaves the

soul out of account. It has no use for it as a substantive fact, and it can do without it even as a name. We have to-day almost universally accepted a psychology without a soul. And the meaning of this is that investigators find it possible to deal with the whole world of mental phenomena without the least reference to it. The revolution is complete for all, save those who are bent, like the devotees of an exiled king, on doing homage to the shade of a deposed monarch ruling over a non-existent territory.

CHAPTER VI.

THE APPEAL TO MORALITY.

To one whose mind is not befogged with theology man's moral sense is the product of intercourse with his environment. And as a consequence it follows that if one wishes to understand the nature of the moral sense one must study the world, social and material, that has produced it. That is a common-sense method, but it will not do for the theologian. It allows little room for mental fog and fantastic speculation, and it has—to the theologian—the sad merit of promoting clear thinking and exact expression. The consequence is that in nearly all writings in favour of survival we have the logical and the natural order reversed. Instead of considering the moral sense in the light of its history and of the world to which it is related, the moral sense is exalted to the rank of an independent judge, and the universe threatened with severe penalties if it fails to come up to expectations. And so far as our special subject is concerned, the general position taken up is that as the world we know does not come up to man's ethical expectations there must be another world, which at present we do not know, where our moral sense will receive the most complete satisfaction.

That is putting the case very plainly, which is, I admit, a very cruel form in which to put a religious

claim, and it is ridiculous, which is inevitable as it is a part of theology. The unillumined intellect can see no reason why the universe must live up to our expectations in the matter of morals any more than it does in the matter of weather. Whether it does so in the one case or in the other is wholly a matter of observation. And one may hazard the observation that whatever be the finding the universe will survive our disapproval, even as it appears to be quite unaffected by our praise. In any case the argument coming from a believer in God is curious and proves the truth of the Johnsonian observation that while "two contradictory statements cannot be true, they may both inhere in the same mind." For, it will be noted, that when the Freethinker questions the existence of God, one reply of the Theist is to point to the wonderful and admirable manner in which this world is constructed. It is then the best of all possible worlds. When it is a question of a future life this world becomes almost as bad as it can be, and is so full of imperfections there must be another one so that the blunders and imperfections of this one may be corrected. The world is perfect or imperfect as the argument is for the existence of a God or for a future state. Even in his unreason the believer is seldom logical for long.

In this connection we may briefly examine an expression that is made to do duty in very many modern writings in defence of theology. In the preface to his *Immortal Hope* Mr. Mellone says:—

> The universe which has produced us is rational, and therefore has not endowed life with the highest

possibilities simply in order that they may perish; that the apparent indications of the annihilation of personality at death, which are supposed to be warranted by some of the facts of experience, or by some of conclusions of nineteenth century science, are only apparent, and break down one by one upon examination.

The universe is "rational," and therefore will not disappoint our expectation of survival. That is the kernel of the argument, put before us by different writers under various forms. And the expression "a rational universe" might be useful, as well as popular, if those who use it would condescend to explain what they mean. Thus, when we speak of man as a rational being there is no confusion involved. We mean that he is a being who is able to reflect consciously upon his experiences, weigh them, and pronounce judgment. But it is obvious that we cannot speak of the universe as being orderly in this sense. That the universe possesses intelligence—apart from the fact that animal intelligence is in the universe—is a wild assumption, and without the slightest spark of evidence. And it is certain that so long as we use the term "intelligence" in an intelligible manner we cannot even think of it existing apart from some form of animal organization.

Is a "rational universe" intended to convey the idea that man can give a rational or coherent account of the succession of natural phenomena? This, I think, is what is usually intended, and if that were always the case there would be no dispute. But that would not help the believer in survival very much. There must be a further implication to be of use, and

this is that because man can give a rational account of natural phenomena these must have been arranged by some rational intelligence, and the expectations to which they give rise are a part of the intended consequences. But this by no means follows. A man may give a rational account of a heap of stones, but it by no means follows that it is therefore a "rational" heap. And the same is true of the universe. For if we take away the heap of stones and substitute the universe, there is no greater warranty for calling matter dispersed through space "rational" than there is for calling a heap of stones rational when collected on a given spot of land. In either case the rationality is not in the objects described but in the person describing.

What is probably at the back of this much used and greatly abused expression is the fact that the phenomena of nature admit of orderly grouping, and which by a figure of speech we call an intelligent grouping But even that grouping is a product of our organization. Our knowledge of the universe is strictly and ultimately conditioned by our sense organs, and there is a necessarily selective quality in our cognition of the universe. The universe is to us what it is because our sense organs are what they are. Natural order is thus, strictly, no more than a registration of sequences *as they affect animal organization*. What natural phenomena are like apart from animal organization we have no means whatever of knowing, and anything said on that head is pure assumption. To call the universe "rational" is, then, saying only that we are able to give a coherent account of our sensible experience. In this sense the phrase is admissible.

But it is indefensible when used to express the idea that the universe possesses rationality apart from animal organization.

From another point of view we have the same fallacy illustrated in the following from Mr. Schiller's *Humanism*. The ethical postulate for immortality consists, he says, in—

> showing that without immortality it is not possible to think of the world as a harmonious whole, as a moral cosmos. To show this, one has not to appeal to anything more recondite than the fact that in our present state of existence the moral life cannot be lived out to its completion, that it is not permitted to display its full fruitage of consequences for good and for evil.....unless therefore we can vindicate this order by explaining away the facts that would otherwise destroy it, we have to abandon the ethical judgment of the world of our experience as good or bad; we have to admit that the ideal of goodness is an illusion of which the scheme of things recks not at all (p. 252).

But I quite fail to see the legitimacy of the expression "moral cosmos" as Mr. Schiller uses it. The universe is harmonious—in other words, is a universe—so long as we can group its phenomena in an orderly and intelligible manner. But it does not follow that generalizations framed to cover certain restricted groups of phenomena must be applicable to all. Biologic and chemical "laws" are, for example, framed to cover particular groups of phenomena, but neither is universally applicable. And the same thing is true of morals. Ethical judgments have nothing to

do with the universe as a whole. Moral laws are generalizations which describe the conduct of human beings living in groups. They begin and end there—or at most, with an extension to certain animal groups—and it is ridiculous to apply to one department of nature generalizations that are intended for use in another. Once upon a time the Christian asked the Freethinking critic, "Shall gravitation cease as you pass by?" Something of the same kind might now be said to the Theist who insists on judging the universe in the light of a preconceived theory.

The argument is a pure begging of the question at issue. The universe, we are told, cannot be a coherent whole unless it satisfies the demands of our moral nature. But on what ground do we assume that the universe must honour every draft that we care to draw upon it in the name of morality? The reason is that we have a theory which says it should. The facts are to be determined by the theory instead of the theory being determined by the facts. It is true that the evil in the world is an indictment of "cosmic justice," but only so long as we hold moral conceptions to be applicable to cosmic processes. If we are guided by the facts that difficulty simply does not exist. There is nothing to shock the moral consciousness so long as we keep before us the legitimate sphere and the meaning of moral judgments. To judge the working of the universe from the point of view of morals is as about as helpful and as intelligent as it is to consider morality from the standpoint of pure physics. It is the fact of putting a God behind or over nature that riddles the whole subject with absurdity.

Another form of the same argument is presented to

us by the late Dr. Martineau. In his elaborate and eloquent *Study of Religion* he says:—

> Were the problem surrendered to physics and metaphysics it could never quit its state of suspense; there would be nothing to forbid the future; there would be nothing to promise it; and on such a question the intellectual balance would be tantamount to practical negation. Not till we turn to the moral aspect of death do we meet with the presiding reasons which give the casting vote.

What these "presiding reasons" are we may gather from the Gifford lectures of Principal Caird:—

> The injustice or inequality seems the more flagrant when we see that it is the very goodness of the good to which their extra share of suffering, the very badness of the bad to which their immunity from suffering is often traceable. On the one hand the very sensitiveness of conscience which characterizes the former subjects them to inward pangs of self reproach, to painful moral conflicts and struggles, to bitter distress for the sorrow and sin of the world, of which the latter know nothing; and, on the other hand, against these and other causes of suffering the vicious and morally indifferent are case-hardened by their moral insensibility.

The truth of this is undeniable, and, indeed, the indictment might be put in very much stronger language. Nature does not take less care in so moulding the vicious character that its very viciousness protects it from pangs to which the better character is exposed, than it does in fashioning the better type of character

which we profess to admire. And that being so, admitting the obvious fact that the relation of conduct to consequence is not of the kind that an enlightened moral sense would approve, we may ask in what way this points to a life beyond the grave. Our complaint concerning the course of things is not concerned with some other world, but with this one. And the genuine moral demand is that things shall be different here, not that they shall be different somewhere else. And even though we grant that things are managed on a more enlightened scale in some other state of existence the evil continues here. For that is not accidental, it is part of the very structure of things. Human nature being what it is, it is quite impossible to conceive a time when the state of affairs shall be generically different from what it is now.

Why must imperfect justice here point so surely to perfect justice elsewhere? If evil triumphs here, how does that prove that elsewhere it must invariably be vanquished? The Dean of Carlisle says that "With immortality we can believe that God is love, and the world the expression of that love; without it we cannot" (*King's College Lectures on Immortality*, p. 100). There is the whole case. We must believe in a future life so that we may believe in the goodness of God. But this world is, on the religious theory, as much God's handiwork as any other. And if he could not, or would not, so arrange matters here that the adjustment of conduct to consequences should be morally justifiable, how can we assume that he can or will manage matters better elsewhere? It is suspiciously like framing a First Offender's Act for the benefit of the deity. This world is, apparently, God's

first effort. He did the best he could, but the best was very unsatisfactory. Still he benefited from experience, and elsewhere he has made another world where all the imperfections that characterize this one are avoided. That is really all the argument comes to. It is giving God Almighty an extra half-hour for repentence, another opportunity for reform. Man is far more considerate for the deity than the deity is for him.

It is argued that this kind of a world was necessary as a school for character. Man's nature needed training, or, as the older theologians put it, this life is a school of probation. But experience, training, can be of value only in a form of existence similar to this one, while on the theory propounded, the next one is to be very different. A training here can be of no value in a world that differs fundamentally from this one. No one would perpare for swimming the Channel by spending his time in bed, nor does one who contemplates undergoing a prolonged fast practice feeding on an intensified scale. An argument that proceeds on the assumption that we must adjust ourselves to things as they are in order to prepare for conditions that are radically different strikes one as the very essence of illogicality.

And when we talk of life here being a school for character what is it that we have in our minds, or have we anything in mind beyond a "rhapsody of words" ? If we all lived the same life on earth we might attach some definite conception to the expression. But that is far from being the case. The life we live is varied to an almost unbelievable degree. What, for example, is there in common between the life of a Bushman and

that of a cultured European? Very little beyond the bare facts of animal existence. But the life of thought and action which they lead is strikingly different. How, then, can we say that the life of each is a preparation or an education for some future state? If it is an educational preparation we must assume that the conditions under which a Bushman and a European will live in the next world are approximately similar to the conditions under which they live in this one. If this is not the case, then all the talk of our lives here being an educational preparation for a life elsewhere is so much verbiage. And if it is the case, then the talk of the conditions in the next world being different from those here is wildly inaccurate.

And there is the additional fact, already touched on, that experience may degrade as well as elevate, may harmonize one's nature to a suitability to evil conditions, as well as urge to an endeavour after improvement. Over indulgence in alcohol does not tend to excite a feeling against it, but rather the reverse. The vicious and the morally indifferent, as Principal Caird says, not only become immune to the pricks of conscience, but their callousness actually protects them from the annoyance and the pain to which a better type of character is exposed. The bad man does not consciously suffer from his badness, it is the good man who is distressed at the sight. In fact, in itself, experience is of no moral value whatever. It is neither moral nor immoral, but simply non-moral. What direct experience does is to teach us to avoid the immediately painful and to pursue the immediately pleasurable, but whether the painful acts in a salutary manner or not entirely depends upon the

subject. Experience may as easily harden in vice as it may strengthen in virtue. We are, in short, back to the old Theistic dilemma. Either God would not or could not have so arranged things that justice and right would always prevail this side of the grave. If he had the will, but lacked the power, why should we assume that he has more power elsewhere? If he possessed the power but lacked the will, why should we assume that he will be differently inclined in another world? If we are to be ruled by evidence, and not by blind faith, we must judge the deity by what we know of his works. And it is worse than idle, it is the very essence of stupidity, to take imperfection here as certain proof of perfection elsewhere.

CHAPTER VII.

IS THIS LIFE ENOUGH?

In the last chapter we were dealing with the argument that the moral sense of man calls for another state of existence in which its "demands" shall receive satisfaction. Closely allied to this is the plea that human nature possesses potentialities that are not exhausted here, but which have been developed with a view to another world. This argument in one form or another is very common, presentations of it are to be found in almost any book which argues for a future life, but to illustrate it I will take three writers, giving the place of honour to a lady. In an essay which appeared originally in the *Contemporary Review*, but was afterwards published in book form, Madame Caillard says:—

> Till we come to man.....each individual existence apparently ceases at death.....With man.....so far from actual conditions exhausting his individuality, they rather seem insufficient to rouse his powers or exhibit its full scope. His conscious demand for himself and his fellows is more time, fewer physical disabilities and mental limitations, a wider sphere, a fuller experience, a wider life.....The body of a bird or of any animal does not strike us as limiting its individuality—rather expressing it in the most appropriate manner.....the individuality of many a human being, on the contrary, seems to be fighting

its way to expression through bodily hindrances, rather than clothing itself in a suitable and controllable manner.

The Rev. Dr. Mellone says:—

Animals, so far as we can see, are able to reach in this world the highest kind of existence possible to them; that they are able to do the best which it is possible for them to do and to feel.....It is possible for the animal to live a complete animal life in this world; full satisfaction is given to its powers and possibilities, if we take into account its relation to its fellow creatures and to its offspring. But it is not possible for man to live a complete human life in this world. Human reason shows no sign of ever stopping in its development, while it seems as if the reason of animals has already stopped. Anyone who thought of denying this would have to meet a difficult question; taking animals as we know them now, could an animal ever be trained by any kind of experience or changes in its environment and its bodily organism to feel and to think as Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, or St. Paul felt and thought (*The Immortal Hope*, pp. 33-4).

Finally, we have Dr. Martineau advising us that the constitution of the human mind is not what we should expect—

if it were constructed for a lease of a single life like ours.....When.....you place side by side the needs of human life, taken on the most liberal estimate, and the scope of the intellectual powers of man, I shall be surprised if you do not find the latter to be an enormous over-provision for the former.....there is clear evidence of their being adequate to indefinitely

more than the present term of life allows them to accomplish (*Study of Religion*, II., 2nd ed., pp. 347-8, 355-6).

These three deliverances have so much in common that they may well be taken together.

To commence with Madame Caillard. There is something decidedly ingenuous about the lady's confident belief that the body of an animal fully expresses its individuality, and in the most appropriate manner. Could an animal put its thoughts into words, it might as confidently say the same of man. Really, all that her statement amounts to is that she can see no necessity for the immortality of animals, and, quite, seriously, I can see neither necessity nor profit in the perpetual existence of a large number of human beings. The universe is not sensibly the better for their emergence, and it is difficult to conceive it as being the worse for their disappearance. As a specimen of pious egotism the opinion leaves nothing to be desired; as a sample of logical reasoning it is deplorably weak.

To say that a man is capable of doing more than he actually does while an animal is not capable of more than it achieves enshrines a very common but a very deplorable fallacy. Unless we affirm that something has become nothing or that nothing can become something, both man and animal do all they can at any given moment. Of course, by varying the conditions we may get a different result; that is, we can conceive either the man or the animal being influenced by different feelings, or being placed in different conditions, which will lead to different action, and no one was ever stupid enough to deny that possibility. But

with all animal life, including man, it remains true that while under the existing conditions what is done is the product of all the forces bearing upon the organism, it is also true that any variation in the conditions will produce a different result. What does differ between man and other animals is the degree of educability. It is in this direction that man has a real superiority over the rest of the animal world. But that is a question of degree only. In fact, taking Madame Caillard's philosophy as a whole it is strongly reminiscient of the old lady's opinion that Adam would have had an easy job naming some of the animals as anyone would know that a pig was a pig the moment he saw it.

Dr. Mellone does not effect any substantial improvement on Madame Caillard. How does he know that animals reach the highest kind of existence possible to them? Animals are certainly more or less educable physically and otherwise. Both the possibility of training and of evolution proves this. Animals do grow in intelligence, and while it may be admitted that the limits of growth are more sharply defined than is the case with man, the fact of growth remains. And when we are asked whether we can conceive an animal ever thinking as Shakespeare or Newton thought, the answer is, of course, No. But I can conceive of some animals reaching a higher degree of mental development than is common to the rest of their species, and that is the real point in question. And, question for question, can we, taking men as they are, think of them all becoming Newtons and Shakespeares? And if not, what is the value of the comparison? Some animals progress more than others, and some men pro-

gress more than others. That appears to be the whole of the matter, unless Dr. Mellone means that we ought to see a horse behave as does a man before we can credit it with the capacity for education or development. The fact is that Dr. Mellone is, unconsciously, playing fast and loose with the conception of man considered as an individual, and the conception of progress as a racial fact. It is with the former only that the idea of immortality is concerned. And so far as that is concerned the argument breaks down on the fact that the individual does not progress indefinitely. It is the race that is capable of indefinite progress, and to that progress no one can place a limit. This point will be more fitly dealt with in considering the argument of Dr. Martineau.

The essential weakness of Dr. Martineau's plea that the capacities of man are greater than the needs of the present life demand, and cannot, therefore, be explained by it—an argument which reappears in Mr. Balfour's *Theism and Humanism*—owes its apparent strength to the ignoring of one whole side of human nature, and that, its most important one. I agree that if human life were constructed for the "lease of a single life," and that, the life of the individual, the argument would be unassailable. But it is one of the facts of the situation that man is a member of a social group, that his whole nature is fashioned with reference to the existence and the needs of the group, and, therefore, his capacities must be judged, not from what are his minimum needs considered as a mere living object, but from the dual point of view of individual and social life. To study man apart from group life is much like taking a steam engine to pieces and attempt-

ing to get an idea of it as a whole by an elaborate examination of its parts quite out of relation to each other. Man's feelings and capacities have on the one side reference to his own preservation, but on the other side they have no less clear reference to the needs of the group. And his nature is such that his feelings crave the existence of the group for their satisfaction.

There is a glimpse of this truth in a remark of Dr. Mellone's that "If the immortal life is to be more than a name for a shadow, it must be a life where men are members one of another, not less, but more, than they are here." Just so. An immortality of solitude would be the most horrible thing imaginable. The social instincts demand satisfaction, and how is that to be given in the absence of conditions substantially different from those that now exist? It is the social side of human nature that Dr. Martineau leaves out of account, and it is the lack of recognition of this factor which gives strength to nearly all of the current Theistic apologies. Men and women work, and give themselves to the work, in the belief that their family, their friends, and their kind will benefit thereby. The brightest and the best of the race have been inspired by this ideal, even though they may have used a religious terminology in expressing themselves. But their sentiments and their capacities are in no wise directed towards a future life, their whole significance lies in their relation to that racial life from which we all spring, and in which we are ultimately merged.

Finally, when Dr. Martineau criticizes the capacities of man in terms of his actual "needs"—again an argument upon which the late A. R. Wallace laid considerable stress—it is clear that what he has in mind

is a mere sufficiency for the maintenance of life. But, surely, from almost any point of view, to live a *human* life implies more than the ability to maintain a mere existence. It is essential to all forms of life that there shall be present sufficient capacity to ward off those forces that make for disintegration; that is an irreducible minimum. But it is one of the consequences of the social development of man that there shall be added to these irreducible needs certain mental, moral, and other needs without which life, even to the savage, would not be worth the living. So that while it may be true to say that the powers of man are greater than would be required to maintain a mere existence, it is emphatically not true that they are an enormous overprovision for the needs of man in other directions. On the contrary, our desires constantly tend to outstrip our powers, and to act as the spur that leads to development. It is plain, also, that instead of there being a surplusage of power, it is the impotence of human strength in the face of desires craving satisfaction of which the best of us are keenly conscious that adds the note of tragedy to many lives.

The fact is that Dr. Martineau, and in this respect he is in the company of most religious writers, only justifies his conclusion by restricting his survey to the lower aspects of human nature. And it is not the least curious feature of the situation that the very people who stand forward as the champions of a higher and more spiritual side of human nature are the ones who insist upon our taking a lower, a coarser, and a more material view of life in order to gain support for their theory of survival after death.

There is a further criticism of a not less fundamental

character that may be passed upon this attempt to depreciate the value of life here in order to appreciate its value in a supposed elsewhere. Immanuel Kant said that those who chafed against the limitations of the understanding were like a bird protesting against the resistance which the atmosphere offered to its flight, ignorant all the time that it was that very resistance to which it owed its ability to lift itself from the ground. One might well apply the same comment to the argument that we are now considering. The believer in survival, when he uses the alleged limitations of life here as a reason for believing in a life elsewhere, is complaining of the only conditions under which life would be worth the living. Could the believer in survival be transported to a sphere of existence in which the conditions of which he complains were absent he would be in the position of one trying to breathe in an atmosphere from which all the oxygen had been extracted.

We may commence the proof of this with the simple fact that neither the animal organs nor their functions, neither our desires nor our feelings are developed at random or *in vacuo*. They are always developed in relation to a fairly definite set of conditions. This is so well understood that scientists have no hesitation in concluding from the examination of a given structure the kind of environment in which an animal lived. And if we take the human body we may deal with it from precisely the same point of view. Thus, the weight of the body bears a direct relation to the mass of the earth. If the earth's mass were ten times what it is, while our bodies remained as they are, we should be crushed beneath our own weight. If our bodies

were one tenth the weight they are we should find it some trouble to retain a position of comfort on the planet. Modify the constituents of the atmosphere beyond a certain point and life would become impossible. Raise or lower the temperature beyond a certain degree and we should have the same result. The organs of respiration and digestion, the amount of muscular strength normally developed, have all direct reference to the conditions of life as they now exist. These are very familiar considerations, and they involve well established principles. It is the more remarkable that it is not generally recognized how strongly, even decisively, they go against the theory of survival beyond death.

For the strength of the argument rests upon the consideration that this question of relation to environment as an essential condition of development applies no less strongly to all our psychical qualities than it does to our physical structure. In the first place development must take place in relation to an existing environment, not to one that is yet to be. Retrospective some of the stages of development may be, as is seen in some of the phases of embryological development, there may even be prospective phases of development such as we have in the gradual development of the sex feelings, but in either case there is a direct reference to an environment that is actually existing now. A development related to a non-existent environment is not alone unthinkable, it is, if we may judge from all we know of the laws of life, a sheer impossibility.

Next, in any other environment than the present one, or in an environment fundamentally different

from the present one, human qualities would be without meaning or value. We may take as a striking proof of this the very thing that is used by the believer in survival as a strong indication of there being another life, that is, the sense of imperfection or of dissatisfaction with existing conditions. This, we are told, seeing that every function has an application somewhere, is an indication that elsewhere there is a state of existence where that feeling of dissatisfaction will be removed, and as that does not, even cannot, occur here, we must assume another life where the desire for perfection will be gratified.

A wilder assumption could not be made. What, after all, is the meaning of the sense of imperfection, or, positively, the desire for perfection? Reduced to its lowest terms it is no more than a manifestation of the principle of natural selection in its simplest aspect. The essential conduct of life in its most primitive form is a simple reaction that responds to life preserving and shrinks from life destroying stimuli. The development of special sense organs enables the animal to do this more effectually, and as we mount in the scale the mechanisms by which the animal guards itself from destruction become more and more elaborate. The highest form of this process is reached when we come to a form of life that is capable of appreciating a future, and therefore acts, not only under the impulse of immediate pains and pleasure, but under the impulse of prospective pleasures and pains. And when we eventually reach the world of human ideas and ideals we have reached the highest form of all. For we have then gained the stage of socialized man, a stage when man creates for himself and his fellows an ideal

environment and works for its consummation. But from the lowest form of life to the highest, from the avoidance by one of the lower organisms of a dangerous object, to man shrinking from unpleasant feelings, and seeking the gratification of desires, we have substantially the same class of phenomena. And if more of our leading writers possessed the capacity for *thinking* scientifically, instead of merely having the industry to overload their minds with ill-digested scientific facts, there would be no need for this point to be stressed here. Perhaps it may be taken as proof of the statement that while the number of people with a knowledge of scientific facts has increased enormously, the scientific thinker is as rare as ever.

But this feeling of dissatisfaction has not the remotest reference to another state of existence, it implies only that we desire some change in the existing one. Thus, when a man steps on my corn I desire him to get off. If I am a " mere Materialist " I may see in this no more than the plain desire to get rid of a painful sensation. But if I am full of mystical longings, or if I belong to a certain school of religionists, I shall see in the desire that the man will get off my corn a sure indication of the existence of some other world where either corns or careless people do not exist. And I quite fail to see that this conclusion is a bit more absurd than is the one that because we are dissatisfied with certain things here and have an idea of a better state, therefore there must be another world in which that ideal will be realized.

The important truth here is that just as the pain from the man standing on my corn causes me to react against it, so the unpleasant feelings aroused by certain things

in the social environment cause me to react against them. The sense of imperfection is, therefore, no promise of perfection, but only a means of driving us along the road of improvement. It is the condition of development, and so long as development continues, so long will the sense of imperfection continue. And if there is another life, and if, as we are assured, development will go on there, then those who inherit that life will have the same sense of discomfort there that they have here. There will be the same discontent with what is actually existing as the indispensable condition for achieving what is aimed at. A state of existence in which this feeling did not exist would be a state in which complete equilibrium had been reached, and complete equilibrium is only another name for absolute stagnation. So that the argument of the religionist really amounts to this: that in order to obtain complete moral satisfaction with life we must live again under such conditions as will make satisfaction of any sort an impossibility.

This dependence of the value of human qualities upon the prevalence of a definite set of conditions is far more intimate than any religionist ever admits. Constantly we find believers in survival dwelling upon the blow dealt to human affection by death, and the joy of reunion in a state where death has no place. Human affection, we are constantly being told, is a mockery if life ends at the grave, and human love would wither in face of the conviction that death ends all. Now I have no desire to deny either that death does bring grief, or to minimise the grief that is felt, or to even wish to do so. On the contrary, my point here is that it is from the grief associated with death

that our deepest and strongest affections spring, and that in the absence of death the better aspects of life would lose their value. Here Kant's analogy of the bird and the atmosphere strictly applies. In complaining of the presence of death we are overlooking the important part it plays in the development of the better parts of our nature.

Birth and death offer the living paradox that while apparently the negation of each other, they are, strictly speaking, conplementary facts. Birth is the other side of death, death is the other side of birth; the significance of the cradle is to be found in the grave; the grave finds its justification in the cradle. On these two complementary facts all human affection centres. In a world where death did not occur affection would wither and love be without meaning. For an absence of death would mean an absence of birth and of all that birth implies. What meaning would such terms as husband and wife, parent and child, or family have in a world where immortality was a fact and death an unknown thing? And if anyone tries, in thought, to take away all that is owing to these relationships, what would there be left worth bothering about? There is a limit to the attractiveness of the mere duration of days. The most attractive of things becomes stale in time. There is a saturation point in human affection as there is with the chemical elements. And one might well stand appalled at the idea of living age after age and with no prospect of any termination. If there is anything that would make existence an unendurable horror it is that.

The proof of what has been said may be given in the shape of one or two homely illustrations. Assume that of two persons one is by some chance protected against

accident, sickness, and death. The other is normally constituted and exposed to all the usual accidents of human nature. To which of the two will our affections the most naturally turn? Decidedly we should not feel anxious about the first. Why should we. His security is assured, and when one has all eternity before him there is no need for worry or anxiety. Inevitably our concern and our affection would gravitate to the second one. That is, I think, about as certain as anything could well be.

Or one may take another instance. Most of us had someone belonging to us on one of the fighting fronts during the recent war, and each will know the constant anxiety as to their welfare and the heightened affection with which we regarded them. But suppose that we had felt absolutely assured that nothing whatever could happen to them, that they were positively protected against accident, wounds, or any other form of destruction. Should we have had the same yearning affection for them? I do not think it at all likely. In that arid atmosphere our affection would wither into a very languid sort of interest, even if it survived at all.

And those who care to analyse their feelings will soon discover that as parents their love for their children does not rest upon a conviction of their immortality, but upon the certainty of their mortality. And that is in line with all that we know of the emotions. We are all concerned, not about the things of which we are certain, but about those of which we are doubtful. That we would like more of a thing is really the essential condition of our liking it at all. We simply reverse the order of things when we make permanence the condition of attachment.

The great need is for people to look this fact of death in the face with their minds free from the mistaken ideas concerning it that are the outcome of centuries of theological teaching. And when we do that, we see that the picture of death as the king of terrors is an idle superstition. That death is the occasion of great grief is indisputable, but that it is also the groundwork of our deepest affections is quite certain, and that love withers in the debilitated atmosphere of perpetual existence is not less certain. Life is, in short, set in a framework of death. It is death that gives an emotional background to the future. It defines life, conditions it, and gives it its meaning and value. Religious teaching has filled the world with a senseless fear of death; it is left for scientific Freethought to provide us with an understanding of its presence, and so detect its true place in the pageant of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUESTION OF WASTE.

THERE remains but one other phase of what we may call the moral argument for immortality. This takes the form of dwelling upon the enormous waste of material, of capacity, and of development if man's career is cut short at death. Again the argument is common to all classes of believers, but we will take it as presented by Dr. Martineau. He says:—

> I do not know that there is anything in nature (unless, indeed, it be the reported blotting out of suns in the stellar heavens) which can be compared in wastefulness with the extinction of great minds; their gathered resources, their unfailing tact, their luminous insight, are not like instincts that can be handed down; they are absolutely personal and inalienable, grand conditions of future power, unavailable for the race, and perfect for an ulterior growth of the individual. If that growth is not to be, the most brilliant genius bursts and vanishes like a firework in the night (*Study of Religion*, Sec. Ed., II., p. 356).

The first comment to be made upon this is that the premises of the argument bear no relation to the conclusions reached. The plea is that genius, being purely personal, the race loses all benefits therefrom through the death of the individual. Having made the complaint he asserts that a remedy is to be found in the

individual living in another world with which the present one has no connection. But in what way can a man living in another world remove the grievance that results from his not living in this one? If he leaves this world it loses his presence, and his living somewhere else does not bring him back again. Whatever the next world may be like, let us hope that there is a greater regard shown there for logic than many believers in it display while in this one.

But assuming the case to be as stated, is there anything in connection with a particular instance of waste in nature that should cause surprise, or demand a special explanation? Waste is no exception, it is rather the rule. A thousand seeds are produced for one that fructifies, a thousand forms of life for one that reaches maturity. Nay, if the aim of nature, or of God, is the production of a perfect form of life, all the imperfect forms of life that have been, and are, represent so much wasted material. We may all wish that nature would display greater economy than she does, but the facts are there and it is our business to frame our theories in accordance therewith and not to make our desires the measure of the necessities of existence.

At any rate, if the qualities of genius are absolutely personal and inalienable, then departure from this life robs the race of the benefit of their presence, whether the individual goes on living elsewhere or not. What we may reasonably question is whether the case has been correctly stated by Dr. Martineau, and whether the qualities of genius are strictly personal in the sense that he uses the expression. It is quite true that the qualities that go to make a genius are centred in an

individual, but for that matter so are those that go to the make-up of an idiot. And the assumed over-provision of capacity in some cases may well be placed at the side of the actual under-provision in other cases. But as a matter of fact there is not one of the qualities that go to make up a genius that is not possessed in some degree by others, while their manifestation in a superior measure is as much racial as personal, and is quite as much an expression of racial inheritance as of personal endowment. We have all heard of the Scot who professed admiration for Shakespeare because there were things that came into his head that never entered the mind of his admirer. But an idea having entered the head of a genius does become the property of more average minds. It took a genius to express the law of gravitation, but that once done a very ordinary mind may claim it as part of its intellectual wealth. And it is precisely because genius can impart some of its greatness to others that it is of such value to all. Were it otherwise the race would be doomed to remain intellectual paupers, forever dependent upon the scraps thrown by a few favoured individuals, but without the capacity to move onward. The world would indeed be in a sad way did it not possess the power to annex the inspiration of some of its choicest minds.

The truth is that in order to arrive at a pre-determined conclusion the issue is quite wrongly stated. The religionist claims for the individual what actually belongs to the race and springs from the corporate life of the group. Thus, when we say that man is capable of indefinite development, or can achieve greater possibilities than those actually accomplished, we are making statements that are true, not of the individual,

but of the race. For, as an individual, man is not capable of indefinite development. His organization, the operation of the normal laws of decay, the fact of inevitable death, all combine to mark a point—however difficult it may be precisely to fix it—beyond which the development of the individual cannot go. Nor is the truth of this affected by the fact that a poet, a musician, or some gifted individual may, through an accident of the environment, never manifest all that he might have displayed under more favourable conditions. There is a substantial difference between the prevention of a quality expressing itself in its full strength and an indefinite expansion of the same quality. A man from lack of nutrition may be unable to lift a hundredweight, but it does not follow that with sufficient nutrition he could lift a ton. The indefinite development of an individual can only have an intelligible meaning so long as it refers to our ignorance of the limits of development in particular instances.

As an individual, and no matter how much he is elevated above the average of his fellows, man has only a limited capacity for development. It is not he that perpetually progresses, but the race. That this is so is shown by the fact that the individual all along depends for his achievements upon the social heritage that awaits him. Language, literature, scientific discoveries, social developments are the conditions that determine how far even the greatest genius may travel. And these things are the products of the accumulated labours of the race. It is impossible to place any limits to development here, and we are therefore justified in speaking, in this connection, of

indefinite development or of incalculable possibilities. But the individual who is taken from the social matrix by death is as surely divorced from the possibilities of progress as are the inhabitants of a desert island from the advantages of national life.

Progress, therefore, is not a fact of individual development but of racial continuity. It is expressed through the individual but it is achieved by the race. A developed humanity is built up from the life of humanity as a whole. It is from looking at the race as it was and as it is that we derive the notion of continuous progress, and it is by a trick of the imagination that we transfer the idea of perpetual progress from the race to the individual. And it is surely the most monstrous of egotisms to assert that unless an individual can exhaust the possibilities of all the achievements of preceding generations, and exhaust, too, the consequences of anything done by himself, that life must be considered a failure. It is when we subject the religious view of man to analysis that we discover how monstrously egotistical and selfish it is. The old Greek comparison of life to a swift runner carrying a torch and handing it, burning brightly, to his successor, expresses a far saner and nobler view of life than the one that has become current under the influence of Christian teaching.

We may here glance for a moment at another view of the same subject as expressed by Mr. Schiller. He puts the moral argument for immortality (*Humanism*, pp. 253-4) on the ground that without immortality character is lost at death, and the basis of the moral order is denied. But character, like everything else, is something that is developed in relation to a specific

set of circumstances. In this case it is the expression of certain relations to one's fellows. A man must be strong, steady, honest, loyal, etc., in relation to something or someone. And it is quite clear in this case what the circumstances are to which these qualities have reference. They are developed in relation to a certain set of social conditions, and without them would be of no value whatever. And to argue that because the conditions of life here prevent the realization of a perfect character, there must be another state of existence where the conditions are so far different that they will permit there what is impossible here, is to assume the existence of conditions that make character of no use at all. To put the matter briefly, the qualities which we praise in human nature are only of value in view of the existence of a certain set of conditions. Consequently, if we consider the next life as providing opportunities for the development of *our* character we must think of the next life as being similar to this one. And if we think of it as being similar the reason given for its existence is negatived. All that is gained by existence in the next world might as easily be gained here. If, on the other hand, the conditions of life in the next world are different from what they are here we shall be altogether out of place. We shall no more fit it than a bird could live in the sea or a fish in the air.[1]

[1] Perhaps the real ground for the insistence of a future life is given, so far as the majority are concerned, in Dr. Mellone's observation that "at bottom the belief in immortality depends on the belief in God." So that all the elaborate evidence collected from an examination of the possibilities and activities of human nature are really so many

The full significance of the argument we have been considering should now be apparent. It is one that goes to the very root of the scientific case against, not merely the belief in immortality, but against religion in general. Many sociologists are to-day taking up the position that organized religion represents a synthesis of social ideals, and is thus being continuously modified by changes in the social medium. This view certainly contains a truth, the exact value of which it is not necessary to estimate. But it is at least true that once the religious idea is fairly under way it lives by an exploitation of the social qualities, and that in an increasing measure. In early stages of social culture we can see all the social qualities expressed in terms of religion. The conditions of life make this association inevitable. And it is only by very slow degrees that some of the outlying departments of life throw off the control of theology. But in spite of the fiercest opposition the reinterpretation of life in terms of a naturalistic causation goes on, first in one direction, and then in another. That the process is

pleas for another belief which is open to dispute. First, we have the belief in a future life justified on the ground that it satisfies the demands of our moral nature. We are told that as there are so many things in this world that ought not to be, God's justice is vindicated by another world in which inequalities and injustices are removed. This point having been gained, we are next told that there must be a future life because there is a God, and he would not create man for his existence to terminate at death. Thus, the belief in a future life becomes alternately the ground and the product of the belief in God. A belief in urgent need of evidence is justified by another belief itself in even still greater need of justification l

nearing the end only a mind blind to the logic of events can doubt.

In the last few chapters we have been trying to show how the moral desires and feelings of man have been wrongly interpreted in terms of a desire for a future life. A body of feeling that has been developed in the course of social evolution, and has application only to man's life here, has been wrongly interpreted as affording sure indication of a life beyond the grave. As in so many other instances we have the primitive conception of things in direct conflict with a more scientific interpretation of nature. Of this primitive view theology stands as the ardent champion. In self-defence it is thus driven to obstruct the healthy working of the social forces, and under the pretence of gratifying the desires of man really to hinder their rational expression.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SOURCE OF THE SOUL.

In an earlier chapter it was remarked that the professed reasons for believing in a future life and the causes of the belief do not coincide. Were it otherwise there would be no necessity for saying more than has already been said. But the reasons examined leave the question of origin untouched, and to the evolutionist it is not enough merely to know that a belief is false, there still remains the question, Why did people ever come to accept it as true? It is that question which is now to be answered, and which to the scientific mind should be decisive. Logically, the question of origin should have come first, but there are times when it is advisable to put convenience before logic, and this would seem to be one of them. Naturally, the findings of anthropology would have been enough for many, but there would have still remained a very large number who would have continued to be influenced by the arguments we have been examining, and, at any rate, having shown the worthlessness of the current pleas for the belief in a future life the way is better prepared for the question of origin. And even with those who are not convinced the bias may be of a less strenuous kind.

We may commence with the fact that the belief in survival clearly ante-dates all the arguments that are now used for its establishment. The experience of

each will show that no one who believes in immortality does so as a consequence of the appeal to philosophy. Even though a sane philosophy supported the belief, it is clear that it did not originate there. And the same truth holds equally of the race and the individual. The belief in survival beyond death is one of the oldest of religious beliefs; it appears before the existence of the belief in God, and it would be little short of insanity to conceive savages whose ignorance of natural process is most profound basing their belief upon any one of the arguments discussed in the preceding pages. All these arguments belong to a period when a long-standing belief is being challenged by more exact knowledge. They are a sign of the end, not an indication of the beginning.

It was also pointed out that an essential and universal feature of the belief in survival is that man is a duality—there is the body and there is something else allied to and yet independent of it. Our enquiry, then, narrows itself to this: Taking for granted the fact, the unquestionable fact, that the modern belief in the soul is ultimately derived from those beliefs which meet us in the lower stages of culture, what is there in the experience of primitive humanity which would suggest the conception of a double inhabiting the body and surviving its disintegration? That is the essential question, and the answer must be as wide as the facts to be explained. It must cover all the beliefs of the peoples of the world.

To this question there are only three answers possible. The first is that the knowledge was given man by direct supernatural revelation. As, however, no one worthy of attention believes in that kind of

revelation to-day, that explanation may be summarily dismissed. The second is that some of the facts upon which the belief in survival is based are so obvious and so universal that the inevitable conclusion was forced upon man at a very early stage of his history, while it was left for a more sophisticated generation to discover the reasons for it. The decisive reply to this is that no one knows what these obvious facts are. There are no facts that are common to all and to which all can appeal. Such facts as are utilized by the believer are not alone subjects of dispute, but they can be shown to be susceptible of a quite different explanation. We are therefore thrown back upon a third explanation, namely, that in the conditions of primitive thought and society we can find a quite sufficient reason for the existence of one of the most universal of human illusions. That explanation lies to hand, well worked out in the writings of such men as Tylor, Spencer, Frazer, and others, and in what follows I have but to summarize their investigations, leaving it for those who wish for further details to study the works for themselves.

The distance between the primitive and the modern point of view is strikingly shown in the fact that the problem that fronts us is the complete reverse of that which fronted primitive humanity. With us the fact of death, natural death, is obvious and inevitable, and our difficulty is to conceive man's continuing to exist beyond the grave. And to us it seems that the belief in an after life is a consequence of either reflection or discovery. The savage outlook is quite different and distinct. Death does not come to him as part of a natural sequence, but as an abrupt and non-necessary

break. His difficulty is not that of conceiving how man can continue to live, but how he can leave off living. With him it is not reflection and growing knowledge that leads to a belief in a future life; continued existence is a datum of his thinking, and his difficulty lies in thinking of man ceasing to be. The modern mind thinks it discovers immortal life; the task of the primitive intelligence was to discover death.

That death and not life is the puzzle that presents itself to the primitive intelligence is seen from the wide-spread myths as to how death came into existence. As in the Christian mythology, we find all over the world legends of the way in which death was introduced. Men are pictured as being by nature immortal, and death is afterwards introduced as a consequence of disobedience or of magic or of the jealousy of the gods. Sir James Frazer has, in the third chapter of his work *The Belief in Immortality*, furnished many examples of these legends, but they can be collected from almost any first-class work on the subject. There would certainly not be these wide-spread stories of how death came into the world if death appeared to the primitive intelligence as it appears to ours. But how could it? What can man, just emerging from the animal stage, know of the causes that make death inevitable? It is true that he must have always seen men die, but, on the other hand, many of these deaths are from violence, or are patently the consequence of violence, others are from disease, which is universally attributed to magic or to the action of some evilly disposed spirit, and in the absence of violence or magic there seems no reason to the savage intelligence why men should not live for ever, or, to put it more

correctly, perhaps, there is no adequate reason why men should die when they do.

The following description given by Frazer of the beliefs of the Abipone Indians about death can be taken as substantially a correct description of what we may regard as primitive man's attitude toward the fact of death. He tells us that many savage races do not to-day accept death in the modern sense.

> They are even of opinion that they would never die at all if it were not for the maleficent arts of sorcerers who cut the vital thread prematurely short. In other words, they disbelieve in what we call a natural death; they think that all men are naturally immortal in this life, and that every death which takes place is in fact a violent death inflicted by the hand of a human enemy, though in many cases the foe is invisible and works his fell purpose not by a sword or a spear but by magic. Thus the Abipones, a now extinct tribe of horse Indians in Paraguay, used to allege that they would be immortal and that none of them would die if only the Spaniards and the sorcerers could be banished from America; for they were in the habit of attributing every death, whatever its cause, either to the baleful arts of sorcerers or to the firearms of the Spaniards. Even if a man died riddled with wounds, with his bones smashed, or through the exhaustion of old age, these Indians would all deny that the wounds or the old age was the cause of his death, they firmly believed that the death was brought about by magic, and they would make careful enquiries to discover the sorcerer who had cast this fatal spell on their comrade.

There is little use in multiplying quotations to the one end. Durkheim and Wundt fully endorse the English

investigators here, and the whole bears out Frazer's conclusion that "at a certain stage of social and intellectual evolution men have believed themselves to be naturally immortal in this life and have regarded death by disease or even by accident or violence as an unnatural event which has been brought about by sorcery and which must be avenged by the death of the sorcerer." [1]

This fact of man being originally ignorant of the real nature of death is of considerable importance to the history of the soul theory. It leaves the road clear for its beginning. If man had commenced his reflective existence with a knowledge of death, or with the conviction that death was the end of his individual existence, a theory or a belief that man continued to exist beyond death would not have been so easily or so

[1] Apart from this objective presentment of the case, there are subjective conditions that would make it a matter of great difficulty, if not an impossibility, for the primitive mind to picture death as a natural fact. Existence is a much easier conception than non-existence, and the extinction of individuality is far too abstract a notion for the undeveloped mind to conceive. Even the civilized intelligence finds it very difficult to think of oneself as non-existent. Part of the feeling expressed at the thought of the extinction of individuality is due to the inability to realize non-existence. When people exclaim at the thought of non-existence they are generally in the position of thinking of themselves as being conscious of their own absolute unconsciousness. This confusion was long ago noted by Lucretius who attributed the power of the priesthood to the fact that so few realized the truth that "death was death indeed." Complete oblivion carries with it no terrors and provides no rational scope for fears. It is only the false conception of a consciousness of one's own unconsciousness that does this.

thoroughly established. As it was the thought of the non-existence of the individual after death had to establish itself in the face of a theory already well accepted, and one which, as we shall see, could appeal to a whole host of experiences which were ignorantly taken to give it direct support. Indeed, it is not the relatively small degree to which a scientific view of man and of nature has taken hold of the human mind that should give us ground for surprise; the wonder is that with so many thousands of generations start, and with so many interests bound up with the perpetuation of primitive modes of thinking, Free-thinking views of man should have obtained the hold they have on the human intellect.

One other word of caution may be needed here. We are so familiar to-day with the fact that the scientific and philosophic theories of nature by which the mental life of educated men and women is guided are the products of long and careful reflection, that we are apt to credit primitive humanity with the same careful reasoning before arriving at definite conclusions. That would be, we are convinced, to take quite a wrong view of the situation. A very striking characteristic of primitive intelligence appears to be its lack of curiosity concerning the nature of the processes that go on around it. Things are accepted for what they are, or appear to be, and the ideas that grow up concerning them must be conceived as of the kind that develop as the product of frequently recurring experiences, and not as the consequence of men sitting down anxious to find an explanation of things that have hitherto puzzled them. So with the majority of people to-day, convictions concerning things arise in a

gradual, unreflective manner and are already established when reflection discovers their existence.

Now from all parts of the world, and from people living in various stages of what we may call the lower culture, there comes unquestionable evidence, not alone of the way in which man came to believe in a " soul " or double, but of the means by which he actually comes to believe in it to-day. Substantially, it begins in the primitive inability to discriminate between objective and subjective experiences. With ourselves there is a very real distinction drawn between our experiences during sleep and those during our waking hours. And during even waking hours the civilized human is more or less on his guard to distinguish between reality and illusion. With primitive peoples no such clear line of demarcation exists. Experience is experience, and whether it occurs during wakefulness or during sleep makes no difference to primitive man. What the savage sees in his dream is to him quite real. When he visits, during sleep, distant places, it is complete evidence that he has been there. When he sees absent people during sleep it is evidence that they have come to him. The persistence of the legends of people getting out of the body, travelling abroad and then returning, is evidence of how deeply rooted this belief is. It represents, in fact, one of the oldest and most universal of all human superstitions. Even in the Bible we have precisely the same thing, no small number of the messages given to the characters therein being delivered during sleep.

A whole host of other experiences support this idea of a double able to leave the body and return to it again. The existence of so impalpable a thing as an

echo, the shadow thrown by a man, the universal explanation of insanity, epilepsy, etc., as being due to the possession of the body by a foreign spirit, all support the primary assumption that man is a duality composed of a body that is seen, and a copy of the body that is unseen. Again I refrain from enlarging these pages by a multiplication of instances, but will content myself with a summary of the facts as given by Tylor:—

> It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a low level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena, the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom. These two are evidently in close connection with the body, the life as enabling it to feel and think and act, the phantom as being its image or second self; both, also, are perceived to be things separable from the body, the life as able to go away and leave it insensible of death, the phantom as appearing to people at a distance from it. The second step would seem also easy for savages to make, seeing how extremely difficult civilized men have found it to unmake. It is merely to combine the life and the phantom. As both belong to the body, why should they not also belong to one another, and be manifestations of one and the same soul? Let them then be considered as united, and the result is that well-

known conception which may be described as an apparitional-soul, a ghost-soul. This, at any rate, corresponds with the actual conception of the personal soul or spirit among the lower races, which may be defined as follows: it is a thin unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow; the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates; independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present; capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place; mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting physical power, and especially appearing to men waking or asleep as a phantasm separate from the body of which it bears the likeness; continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body; able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things (*Primitive Culture*, Vol. I., pp. 428-9).

This may be taken as a fair and comprehensive description of the "soul" or double as it appears in primitive thought, and is a fair picture of the conception of the soul as it runs right through the history of religions. And the fact that the soul or ghost when it appears in religious legends is always a picture of the living man in his bodily form is almost enough by itself to substantiate this account of the dream-origin of the soul.

This theory is, as I have said, endorsed by the savage conception of the nature of disease, whether mental or physical, as being due to some evil spirit taking possession of the body. In another work [2] I

[2] *Religion and Sex*, Chapters III., V., and VI.

have pointed out to how great an extent in the history of religions, and as a consequence of this mistaken view of the nature of illusion and mental states, the deliberate cultivation of abnormal states of mind by fasting, the taking of drugs, and the systematic ill-treatment of the body, has been utilized as a means of keeping alive the sense of supernatural illumination and of intercourse with a ghostly world. And in truth the story of religion in this respect forms a continuous whole from the visions of the savage resulting from the states of mind into which accident or design throws him, down to the latest message from the spirit-world received by the present day spiritualistic medium.

The idea of a double having originated in the manner described there follow developments that are strictly logical in their nature, and important in their social consequences. It is not alone living things that are seen in dreams, but inanimate ones also. It is therefore a simple matter to conclude that these likewise have their double. Death, again, is not the destruction of the ghost, but merely its separation from the body.[3] And it will enter the next world exactly as it left this one. Hence the practice of disfiguring the dead bodies of enemies so that their mutilated ghosts will parade the spirit world in that condition, and also the custom of killing one's old relatives before sickness overtakes

[3] The savage does not assert immortality of the ghost, but merely its continued existence for a longer or shorter period. And as a matter of fact most savages believe that after a time the older ghosts are really dissipated. They are most active just after death, but when the memory of them fades their existence fades also. This is exactly what one would expect to be the case.

them in order to ensure that their ghosts will be strong in the realm of shades.

The next world is a pale copy of this one and the ghost but an attenuated copy of the man. He has the same needs there that he had here, and it is the duty of the living to supply them. Weapons are accordingly buried with the dead warrior or hunter so that he may use their spirits in fighting or in hunting. Food is buried with the dead so that its spirit may feed ghostly bodies. The modern practice of scattering flowers on a grave is a direct survival of this practice of supplying the ghost of the dead with food.

A more ghastly consequence of this attending to the wants of the ghost is that of supplying it with wives and attendants. Slaves are killed so that their ghosts may attend on the dead chief, wives so that they may accompany their husbands to the ghostland, the number of wives and attendants killed depending on the importance of the dead man. Sheep and oxen are also, in many cases, burned on the grave, and horses on that of warriors.[4] The world-wide character of these customs may serve as a fitting comment on those who argue that the belief in a future life has an elevating effect on human nature.

[4] At the funeral of Edward VII his horse was led behind the coffin to the grave. In earlier times it would have been killed. But we have a clear survival of this primitive practice. It is striking that it is in connection with the royalty and aristocracy of a country that we find the clearest illustrations of savage ideas. In this respect the "higher" social orders are nearer the savage than are the "lower" ones. Thus, Tylor cites the case of a French king whose effigy was for forty days after death solemnly served with food with all the ceremonial that accompanied it while the king was living. But kingship itself, as Frazer has shown, is a survival of pure savagery.

But it would be a mistake to assume that these practices are followed out of affection for the ghost. On the contrary, the principal emotion felt in connection with the ghost is that of fear. As most of the ills of life are attributed to the ghost this is not surprising, and the fear which the ignorant among ourselves still have of ghosts is reminiscent of one of the oldest of human feelings. There is first of all the practice of ghost dodging, as illustrated in the way the body is buried. The dead is carried out by the window, or through a hole made in the side of the house, which is afterwards blocked up again, the theory being that as the ghost can only return by the way that it went out return is made impossible. Or the body is taken to the grave by a roundabout way so that it may be difficult for it to get back again. There are numerous variations, but the idea and the purpose of them all is the same.

Another very striking survival of this fear of the ghost we have still with us in our own practice of wearing black after a death. Careful investigation and comparison of customs all over the world leaves little room for doubt that the wearing of mourning clothes, or mourning masks, or the custom of painting the bodies of relatives after a death are all so many forms of disguise. It is assumed that the ghost will not know the living in their unusual dress or disguise. It is also in order to avoid recognition by spirits who might wish to injure them that the Tongans change their war-costume at every battle. The same desire to be secured from the attentions of the ghost leads the Chinese to call their best beloved children by the most worthless names. In ancient Egypt the children who were

thought the most of were the worst clad. In all probability the custom with many of the tribes of India of having two names, one a real one that is never disclosed, and one by which the child is known, had its origin in the same fear.

Finally, it has to be noted that just as the soul is thought of as a diminutive copy of the body, so the next world is modelled upon this one, the only difference being that there is more of what people like and less of what they dislike. In the next world, says Tylor,—

> There the soul of the dead Karen, with the souls of his axe and cleaver, builds his house and cuts rice; the shade of the Algonquin hunter hunts souls of beaver and elk, walking on the souls of his snow-shoes over the soul of the snow; the fur-wrapped Kamchadel drives his dog-sledge; the Zulu milks his cows and drives his cattle to the kraal; South American tribes live on, whole or mutilated, healthy or sick, as they left this world, leading their old lives, and having their wives with them again, though, indeed, as the Auracanians said, they have no more children, for they are but souls. Soul land is dream land, in its shadowy unreal pictures, for which, nevertheless, material reality so plainly furnished the models.

The so-called higher religions follow the same plan. The Mohammedan, the Christian, the Brahman, each pictures the next world as making up for the deficiencies they have experienced in this one. Religions usually remain true to type, however much they may vary in form.

There are two points here that I wish to stress. The

first is that we have a quite unbroken history of the soul idea from its beginning in the fear-stricken ignorance of the primitive savage up to its latest manifestation in the most "liberal" of religious sects. There is no break anywhere. Each form arises out of that which went before, is built upon it, and is identical with it save for such modifications as current experience and knowledge forces upon it. There is, therefore, no doubt as to how the idea of a soul and of a future life came into existence. The nature of its origin lies open for all who will to read. As Tylor says, "The animism of savages stands for and by itself; it explains its own origin. The animism of civilized men, while more appropriate to advanced knowledge, is in great measure only explicable as a developed product of the older and ruder system." But a product of that older system it undoubtedly is, and but for the assumption of the savage the soul would never have existed. It owes its existence to an inevitable psychological blunder made by the primitive savage.

The second point is that if this theory be accepted as true, the whole notion of a soul as something that is independent of the body, and which survives the disintegration of the body stands self-condemned. There may still be room for discussion as to the nature of the various phases of development this belief in a soul has undergone, but there can be no longer debate as to whether it is true or not. You may reject the anthropological conclusion and accept the animistic one, but you cannot accept both. It is beyond question that if the savage had known what we know concerning the brain and the nervous system, had he

known what we know concerning the nature of the forces around us, had he been in our place, neither gods nor ghosts would ever have come into existence. The blunder was inevitable to his ignorance; but there is surely no justification for our preserving his blunder in the face of our better knowledge, and retaining his interpretation of phenomena which our own knowledge enables us more accurately to understand.

CHAPTER X.

SPIRITUALISM.

An examination of the belief in a future life which contained no reference to the prevalent belief in what is known as Spiritualism would be considered by many to be incomplete. And for various reasons a study of Spiritualism is worth the making. Quite apart from the historical interest of such an enquiry, the belief in and the practice of Spiritualism open up many important questions in both normal and abnormal psychology. Unfortunately, the scope of the present work will permit only a very brief study of the subject, although I hope to present at least the outlines of what I conceive to be the right method of conducting such an examination.

To begin with, the Spiritualist stands alone among the believers in a future life in claiming that his case rests upon observed and verifiable facts. Certainly the array of eminent men who at one time or another have given the Spiritualistic theory a more or less qualified support is very striking, aud if that kind of testimony were enough to establish the truth of a theory Spiritualism would stand a fair chance of being accepted as true. But one remembers that there is not a falsity on the face of the earth that has not had the support of eminent men. Indeed, without it a false belief would stand very little chance of ever being established. Eminent men testified to the truth

of a flat earth, to the movement of the sun round the earth, to the reality of witchcraft, and other absurdities. There is nothing in the history of science that would lead one to accept the testimony of a great man on any subject as of necessity final, and when the great man happens to be dealing with something that is outside his special province, then his evidence is still less conclusive. So the appeal to great names leaves the genuinely scientific enquirer quite cold. If authority could permanently establish anything the world would hold but one absurdity in each department, for no second one would stand the slightest chance of ever being accepted.

On the general claims of Spiritualism there are two or three preliminary observations that may be made. The first is that if existence beyond the grave be a fact, and if there are actually means of communication between the dead and ourselves, one would have imagined that, considering the many thousands of generations during which the human race has existed, and the myriads of millions of human beings who have died, the fact of a future life should by now be so firmly established as to be beyond the possibility of question. If Spiritualism be true we are dealing with an ever present fact, and with permanent qualities of human nature. But instead of finding this constant fact and these permanent qualities generally recognized, what we find is that the vogue of Spiritualism ebbs and flows, attracting general attention at one moment, and sinking into the quietude of a religious organization the next. This is a phenomenon, on the face of it, in far greater consonance with the existence of an epidemic illusion than aught else.

Second, although what is called Modern Spiritualism dates from only the middle of the nineteenth century, Spiritualism as connoting certain observed phenomena has a much older history, and does, indeed, connect directly with what we know of savage practices. But we also know the facts upon which the beliefs of savages are built, and all of these facts we are now able to explain without the slightest reference to the supernatural or to the belief in a future life. And when we find an unbroken chain between the beliefs of the savage and those of the modern Spiritualist, when we consider that in the history of the race the first explanation of the unusual or the abnormal has always been in terms of the supernatural or the "spiritual," even excluding all question of deliberate fraud, one is no more inclined to accept at its face value the Spiritualistic explanation of what takes place at a modern seance than one is inclined to take the visions of a mediæval monk as proof of his intercourse with a ghostly world. As Mr. Podmore remarks of the celebrated Mrs. Piper, that her mediumship would have been more convincing had it "come to us out of the blue, instead of trailing behind her a nebulous ancestry of magnetic somnambulism, witch-ridden children, and ecstatic nuns," so he says with equal truth of Spiritualism in general:—

We have still to deal with the same protean figures —vengeful human ghosts, familiar spirits, shaman or wizard, angels from the abyss, devils released from Jewish or mediæval hells, oracles of Olympian deities, spirits of angels and prophets, spirits of earth, air, and fire, spirits of the damned, spirits on furlough

from purgatory, spirits floating in a Swedenborgian limbo, ghosts of fleas and archangels, decaying astral shells, spirits of the seven celestial spheres, spirits clothed in luminiferous ether—they have been with us since the first syllable of recorded time, and generation after generation they have shaped themselves to suit the changing fashion of the hour, the hidden or hinted hopes of those who put their trust in them (*The Newer Spiritualism*, pp. 296-7).

I wish to stress this aspect of the matter because it throws a very strong light upon what I believe to lie at the root of the observed phenomena. I am convinced that at the foundation of the belief in Spiritualism—and on which tricksters of all kinds have plied their trade—there exists a misunderstanding of abnormal states of mind, varying from the very mildest forms of automatism on the one hand to pronounced pathological states on the other. In no other way can we account for the fact that the next world—about which, if the communications are genuine, there should certainly be some uniformity in the information supplied by those who allege they are living in it—is described by these alleged spirits in such contradictory terms, but always in agreement with the environment in which we ourselves are living. On the Continent it is common for the spirits to assure us that re-incarnation is a fact. In England the information is to the contrary. In Italy it is not unusual for the spirits to profess Atheism; in England a wishy-washy Theism is the rule. The spirit world is all round us, or above the earth, or in the milky way. It is a real and tangible existence to one spirit; it is a creation of the mind to another. The spirits have a vocal language as we have;

they have no vocal language, but communicate by a species of celestial telepathy. Spirits grow, or do not grow, or, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us, they grow both older and younger till they all stop at about thirty years of age, which, curiously enough, is the age at which most of us would like to stop if we could manage it. There is simply no limit to the variety and contradictoriness of the information given to the living by the dead. And one may readily excuse the spirits being unable to decipher the contents of a sealed letter when they cannot make up their minds as to the character of the world in which they claim to be living. All this is puzzling enough so long as we attempt to treat it as a description of an actual place, but it becomes understandable, in both its contemporary and historic relations, when we regard it from the proper point of view.

But while to take these alleged spiritual communications at their face value is absurd, it is equally ridiculous to accept the theory that Spiritualism is no more than the product of deliberate and conscious trickery, the outcome of vulgar tricksters and clever conjurors. That is quite unsatisfactory to anyone who approaches the subject with a first-hand knowledge, and with the necessary acquaintance with abnormal psychology. That there is trickery connected with Spiritualism is so patent that not even its avowed defenders dispute it. There are very few of the well-known public mediums who have not been detected in fraud, and, indeed, the conditions under which public seances are held are favourable to trickery, while the credulity of the majority of those who attend invite it. But the nature of that trickery is

quite another question, and one to which few of those who delight in showing how the trickery is effected appear to have paid much attention. After all, when we have a species of happenings that goes back generation after generation, from ourselves to the primitive savage, there must be something more in it than deliberate and conscious trickery. If mere trickery can be carried on generation after generation, and over so wide an area, practically co-extensive with the human race, the fact of trickery strikes one as being slightly more wonderful than the alleged reality. On the other hand, the fact that all the fundamental phenomena of Spiritualism, trance-mediumship, automatic writing, crystal-gazing, etc., can be seen under conditions where there is not the slightest suggestion of spirit agency, is enough to prove the needlessness of that theory. In short, both the assertion that in Spiritualism we have proof of a future state of existence, and the assertion that the phenomena which are commonly known under the name of Spiritualism are nothing but the outcome of mere trickery, strike one as being elaborate efforts in misdirection, and both exhibit the same want of acquaintance with the actual nature of the facts. Spiritualists know that the theory of fraud will not cover the experience they have in their own homes, and often in their own persons; but those who approach the subject from a genuinely scientific point of view know that there is with Spiritualism no greater evidence of the existence of a future life than there is proof of a hell or heaven in the visions of a mediæval monk.

It is, in fact, good advice for anyone who really wishes to understand Spiritualism, not to permit their

minds to become obsessed with either the fact or the question of conscious fraud. That should be taken for granted in all cases where professional mediumship is in question, and also in many other instances, and then attention should be turned in other directions. For to be on the look out for fraud, and to assume that it is a question of either conscious fraud or communications with the dead, is to play right into the hands of the Spiritualist. The man who enters the seance room looking for fraud and nothing but fraud, is helping to divert attention from the quarter to which it might profitably be directed. Looking in the wrong direction has the natural effect of preventing his looking in the right one. And he imagines that he has protected himself against deception when he has in reality exposed himself to the greatest deception of all—that which comes from entering on the study of a subject without the necessary mental equipment for understanding the matter in hand. Had those who have become devotees of Spiritualism understood what it was with which they were dealing they would never have accepted the Spiritualistic explanation. And had those who have written so much about the frauds of Spiritualism also understood the subject they would have written less, and would have enlightened Spiritualists as to the meaning of what was going on under their eyes. As it is they have helped the Spiritualist by encouraging the delusion that, provided conscious fraud was excluded, there was nothing left but to accept the explanation which Spiritualists favour.

The present position with regard to Spiritualism may be illustrated by noting what has taken place in the

history of religion. To begin with we have the savage's conviction of intercourse with gods and ghosts, based on no better foundation than his ignorance of the meaning of natural processes. Then we have that belief organized into the religions of the world, followed by the continuous interpretation of human feeling and experience in terms of supernaturalism. Finally, we have a number of unscrupulous practitioners deliberately pretending to receive commissions from the spiritual world, with no other object than that of deceiving the people, and just as "mediums" have often enough been provided with all the material of the conjuror's cabinet, so we have with religions, winking Madonnas and bleeding statues as concrete evidence of supernaturalism.

Now, it was a matter of ease to declare the religious idea to be false, and to prove that it was based on a delusion. But much more than that was needed to make the case against religion complete. Merely to say of a man or woman during adolescence that there was here no basis for belief in the action of God was not enough. It left the person chiefly concerned unconvinced. The feelings remained and were so far real. To one ignorant of the effects of fasting, or other forms of self-abuse in breeding illusions, it was folly to denounce the resulting visions as sheer imposture. The evidence for the belief was there before the eyes of the religious believer. If he believed that a man could get into touch with a supernatural world, there was his own misunderstood experience to support his opinion. If he believed that spirits could take possession of the human body, there were before him the facts of epilepsy or insanity. Religion has lived

through the ages, not in virtue of deliberate imposture, although there has been plenty of that mixed up with it , but because in the absence of adequate knowledge there was what appeared to be strong evidence of its truth. This is substantially the position of Spiritualism to-day. There is trickery, conscious and unconscious, in plenty. There is self-deception galore, and we are faced with faked spirit photographs, and all the paraphernalia of deliberate deception. But for one who is converted to Spiritualism by these methods there are a dozen brought to believe in communications with the dead through happenings in their own family circle, and their experinece calls for quite a different kind of explanation. And it is these cases that provide the foundation for the business of the professional trickster just as it was the ignorance of the people that provided the material on which the Churches of the world have worked. Naturally so. It cannot be the many that deceive the few, it must always be the few that deceive the many. We have to do with Spiritualism what we have been able to do with religion—that is, not merely to say that it is false, but to show why people have believed it to be true, what are the facts, real and assumed, upon which it has built, and, finally, to show that so far as they are genuine facts we no more need a spiritual world to explain them than we need the demons of the New Testament to explain the ravings of a lunatic or the struggles of an epileptic.

I am not aiming at going over in detail the mass of so-called evidence that is offered on behalf of Spiritualism. My aim is of a more restricted character. It is that of a brief examination of what one may call the residuum of genuine fact when all of a doubtful or

irrelevant nature has been excluded. And I think it can be shown that this residuum in no wise points to what the Spiritualist believes it indicates.

It is to be borne in mind that the Spiritualist aims at proving that we live after death, and that communication between the dead and the living takes place. Anything that does not prove that is, for him, quite useless. He is not concerned with proving that there exist unknown forces in nature, or that man, as man, possesses unexpected capacities. The truth of each of these propositions is conceivable, but they would not benefit the Spiritualistic theory in the slightest degree. And of the larger part of the evidence which the Spiritualist throws at the head of the sceptic one may safely say that it is utterly irrelevant to the point at issue. When we read accounts of a heavy object being moved round a room without the observers being able to detect how it is done, when we are told that by telepathy people are able to communicate with each other apart from the usual channels of communication, or that certain people, sitting under certain conditions, are able to exude some kind of a force that moves tables or other objects, there is not one of these things separately, nor all of them collectively, that prove existence the other side of the grave. If true, they are wonderful, but the wonderful does not prove the supernatural, nor does the fact that one man can manipulate forces of which the majority of us are ignorant, prove that we live again after death. They prove that we have still many things to learn, and no one but a fool would deny the abstract truth of that proposition. But it is just as well to have a clear idea of what it is that we set out to prove, and how far

the evidence offered serves this end. Not a little help has been given to Spiritualists by the uncritical nature of the arguments brought against them; their opponents evidently believing that they must disprove everything that was offered whether it had any bearing upon the point or not.

Let us assume it as proved that by a number of persons sitting in darkness or in semi-darkness a number of forces, "psychic" or otherwise, are set in motion. In what way can that prove the truth of the Spiritualistic hypothesis? It is part of that hypothesis that whether we are on this side of the grave or the other we are still human beings, neither more nor less. The powers we have here we have there. We are the same persons differently lodged, and John Smith living in "Summerland" only differs from John Smith here as he would living in London and Brighton. And if one human being can "control" another one and set in motion forces that he does not manifest under ordinary conditions, whether one is on this side of the grave or the other, does not seem to make any substantial difference. If, when sitting with another human being, a table begins to waltz round the room, I do not see why it must be due to the spirit of my deceased grandfather rather than to my own influence or that of the other person. If it is not possible in the one case, why is it possible in the other? If a certain result can be achieved by the co-operation of two human beings, one on this and one on the other side of the grave, why cannot the same result be reached by two on this side? In this respect the "proof" of Spiritualism tends to annihilate itself at the moment of achieving success. It is, moreover, being admitted by

declared believers that the evidence which satisfied Spiritualists of a previous generation—men of the standing of Judge Edmonds and Andrew Jackson Davis—would not be satisfactory to-day, because we have a different explanation of the facts that seemed to them to prove spirit intercourse.[1] That is, the facts which these men took as conclusive proof of a future life prove nothing of the kind. In this matter we appear to be moving on the plane where anything unusual or mysterious is at once put to the credit of the supernatural. That has been one of the sources of religious belief from the earliest times, and there is no reason for assuming that the end will be different in the particular case of Spiritualism from what it has been with many other elements of religious belief.

In this respect, too, Spiritualists are not quite playing the game. When the names of eminent men are brought forward in support of the genuineness of certain phenomena the reader is left with the impression—one feels a calculated impression—that these testimonies as to the realities of the happenings imply an acceptance of the Spiritualistic theory. And that is decidedly not the case. Professor Flammarion, in his *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, devotes a whole chapter to a discussion of the various theories put forward to account for the phenomena by those who accept them as genuine, and himself concludes that to explain what takes place, "The hypothesis of spirits of another order than that of human beings does not seem to be necessary" (p. 421). And it may be here

[1] See *Science and a Future Life*, by Dr. J. H. Hyslop, pp. 13-15.

noted that the original theory of possession, that is, that the spirit of the dead person actually inhabits the body of the medium, is now giving place to the theory that the spirit impresses the mind of the medium by a species of spiritual telepathy. This, however, only lands the Spiritualist in another difficulty. On the theory of possession there was an explanation of the Indian talk and the other peculiar patter of the seance room. On the theory of spiritual telepathy this is reduced to an elaborate make-believe. The medium is simply playing a part. And this is, as we shall see later, what most probably takes place. Once more we are witnessing a repetition of what has so often been seen in the history of religion. The world we live in is the same as that in which our savage ancestors lived, but one does not need to deny the existence of the world in order to reject the savage's explanation of it.

But it is not altogether a question of mere testimony, but of the right kind of evidence from the right kind of man. No one questions for a moment the honesty of the eminent men who are cited in support of Spiritualism, it is simply unfortunate that, for the greater part, they should have belonged to the class of eminent men who could not carry conviction on this particular subject. They had not the intimate acquaintance with the class of facts that would throw light upon the phenomena before them, and in science there is no authority, as such, there is only an authority in virtue of a knowledge of the matter under discussion. And where we have the same facts observed by two or more different persons without agreement as to what occurred or its meaning, it is

absurd to speak of that as scientific evidence. It does not fulfil the initial condition of scientific evidence. And of the eminent men who have spoken in favour of Spiritualism the overwhelming majority have been so poorly equipped for the work that they have seldom bothered to get a life history of the mediums with whom they were experimenting—information that was of vital importance to a genuinely scientific understanding of what was going on. Here and there we get the required information, given in a more or less casual manner, as when we learn of the celebrated Eusapia that her first mediumistic manifestations began at the age of puberty, and that while in the trance state " her face flushes.....she courts caresses," the success of her phenomena causes " agreeable and even voluptuous thrills," " her legs and her arms are in a state of marked tension, almost rigid, or even undergo convulsive contractions." These are, as will be seen, illuminating details, and one wishes there were more of them. Had the scientific men who have investigated Spiritualism compiled a life record of the various mediums that came under their observation their conclusions would have been of a more helpful nature than they are at present. As it is, it is almost pathetic to note the elaborate care taken to prevent the fraud of the deliberate trickster, without taking the least precaution against the unconscious deception of personal pathological conditions. And not only were the precautions taken often valueless against deliberate trickery, they were obviously useless in preventing a misunderstanding of what was actually taking place. Worse than being useless, they helped in their turn to promote misunderstanding, as they gave the outside

public the impression that the experiments were conducted under adequate scientific conditions. And that, most decidedly, was not the case.

I am not now writing a history of Spiritualism, or pretending to do more than glance at some important aspects of the subject that are generally overlooked or insufficiently stressed. For that reason I am not dealing with what is known as the physical side of the manifestations—the alleged materializations of spirits, spirit photographs, etc. There are any number of popular works written on that aspect of Spiritualism, and Mr. Frank Podmore, in his various books on the subject, has gone very carefully into the matter.[2] It will suffice to say here that there is not a single one of the phenomena associated with Spiritualism that expert performers have found incapable of producing, and there is hardly a well-known medium who has not at one time or another been detected in trickery, sometimes the fraud of the common trickster, at other times the deception of those who mistake the operations of their own disordered personality for actual objective occurrences.[3] Moreover, the stress laid upon these

[2] See his *History of Spiritualism, Studies in Psychical Research, The Naturalization of the Supernatural, The Newer Spiritualism,* etc.

[3] It is at least suspicious that there has gone on a progressive development in the ways in which these alleged communications with the dead have been carried on. First we have the vogue of crude table-tilting. Then, following exposure after exposure, we find that giving way to other methods. Of course, it may be said that the spirits are gaining greater proficiency in their methods of communication, but it is curious that this is the line of development followed in the history of any deliberate delusion. We have to begin

material manifestations by the critics of Spiritualism, combined with the wonder-loving capacity of the outside public, has given them an altogether undue importance. They are not by any means so common as a mere perusal of the literature of the subject would lead one to assume. I believe it to be the truth that a large majority of Spiritualists have never seen a materialization, or witnessed many phenomena of a material kind, although they are quite willing to take its reality on the testimony of others. It is the facts of their own experience that lead them to believe as they do, and in the absence of other explanations they may be excused accepting them at their face value as proofs of spirit communication. But are they? That is the important question. And one answer to the question is found in the fact that it is possible to parallel these experiences with examples in which there is not the least suggestion of spirit communication.

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with certain simple methods of deception, and as these become known, more elaborate ones are introduced. It may be that the spirits are becoming more proficient; it may also be that the mediums are becoming more expert.

CHAPTER XI.

SPIRITUALISM—*Continued.*

THE essential thing aimed at by the Spiritualist is the establishment of a belief in a future life by providing proof of communication with the dead. Anything that does not do this is, so far as he is concerned, wide of the mark. Moving tables and levitating bodies he is not, as Spiritualist, at all interested in. He values them as proofs that there is "spirit agency" at work, and they serve this purpose with a great many because with the "vulgar" mind a thing that cannot be at once explained may be attributed to anything the operator wishes. Spirit agency has always been a favourite explanation of anything at all puzzling and unusual, and it has held the field until science has come along and reduced the strange phenomenon to a definite category of natural law, and so good-bye to spirit agency. In any case the only thing that will serve the purpose of the Spiritualist is plain and unmistakable communication with the dead. That is why the central fact of Spiritualism has always been the trance. With the exception of table-tilting messages, the alleged communications from the dead are chiefly delivered through a medium in the trance state, either orally or by means of automatic writing.

It is mainly upon the authority of trance utterances that the material manifestations have been taken as products of spirit action, and as action and reaction are equal and opposite, here as elsewhere, the material manifestations have in turn been used to back up the genuineness of trance communications. And the genuineness of what is called the trance may be taken as beyond question—not, be it noted, the genuineness of the Spiritualistic interpretation of the trance state, but the actual occurrence of the state itself.

What, then, is the nature of the trance? The answer to that question opens up one of the more recent chapters in the history of psychology, but it is there for all to read who will. We may commence with the old and the new conception of consciousness. To the old psychology the personal consciousness of each was a single indecomposable thing. Just as the old physicist assumed that air and water were "elements," so the psychologist assumed that in dealing with consciousness we were concerned with a *thing*, something that admitted of no further analysis, and that all we had to do was to chronicle its qualities and movements. But just as in the physical sciences the "elements" have had a somewhat disastrous history, one after another being resolved into something else, so consciousness turns out to be not a single indecomposable entity, but, to use William James' admirable expression, "an affair of relations." The personal consciousness of each of us turns out to be a composite structure, a string of experiences which become integrated into a definite whole, is slowly built up, contains many unsuspected possibilities, and is capable of more or less rapid, and more or less complete and permanent

disintegration. This is the deliberate conviction of a school of psychologists that is rapidly growing in number and authority; it is an endorsement of that for which the really scientific materialist has for long contended, and the researches of the psycho-analytic school serve to give it a very practical demonstration. "For twenty years past," said the late William James, "I have mistrusted 'consciousness' as an entity; for seven or eight years past I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded." [1] "Consciousness" is the expression of a relation, not the name of a thing.[2]

If what has been said be accepted as even approximately true, we must conceive of the personality of each being built up in a manner analogous to that in which the nervous system itself has been built up. Just as we have the capacities of the separate cell being built up into nerves and nerve centres, each with its appropriate reflexes, the whole being organized to form that largest group of responses which we imply when we speak of an organism, so we have the different experiences, or awarenesses, built up and organized into the personality which we know as

[1] *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 3.

[2] The use of the word "consciousness" helps to give the unwary reader the notion of a thing instead of a relation. That will be avoided if we bear in mind that consciousness is no more than "awareness." To be conscious of a thing is to be aware of it, and the general term "consciousness" covers the totality of things of which we are from moment to moment aware.

Smith, Jones, or Robinson.[3] Our consciousness is the reflection of a unified whole, and so long as it

[3] "Every nerve cell anatomically considered is a complete unit. The processes coming out from the different nerve cells do not fuse with processes coming out from other nerve cells, but rather interlace and come in contact like the electrodes of a battery in forming the electric circuit.....The association of nerve cells is not organic, but functional..... The association of cells forms a group whose physiological function has concomitant mental activity.....By means of association fibres the groups are organized into systems, the systems into communities, the communities into clusters, the clusters into constellations, and each of the higher complex aggregates is more feebly organized by less stable association fibres.

Now, if the constitution of the individual mind be made up of many subordinate minds, or of individuals less complex in character, we may well conceive the formation of secondary individualities or of secondary personalities in the various states of mental dissociation and degeneration. Under the influence of hurtful stimuli, be they toxic or traumatic in their nature, the first stage of functional degeneration may give rise to functional dissociation along different lines. Different individualities, often parasitic in character, may arise, develop and even stifle the primary personality. There may be as many different personalities, parasitic or secondary, as there are possible combinations of and disaggregations of psycho-physiological aggregates. There may, therefore, be different forms of secondary consciousness or of multiple personality. There may be a simultaneous character or one of alternation. The personalities may appear side by side, or they may appear alternately. The play of personalities may be of a dramatic character, the characters and personalities appearing on the scene like so many actors, the whole appearing as a play of so many different persons."—Dr. Boris Sidis, *Multiple Personality*, pp. 52-3.

functions as a whole we have expressed the normal personality with which we may happen to be acquainted. The "ego" of each person is thus a complex of experiences, or more correctly a group of complexes, each of which may have its own peculiar reactions to the environment. But a very little reflection will show that the theatre of consciousness displays at any one time but a very small proportion of the total experiences of which we have been conscious. Some of these are so near to consciousness that they are continually appearing and disappearing, and are capable of being revived whenever we need them. But there are others which we find it much more difficult to revive, such as meet us in what we call lapses of "memory"—one of those phrases which help so conveniently to cover our ignorance of what actually occurs. And there are others which we cannot recall at all, which we have completely forgotten. But, and it is very important to remember this, there is probably nothing, certainly very little, that is ever completely lost. It is buried, but not beyond the possibility of resurrection. This has been proved in thousands of experiments, and comes out with peculiar force in experiments with hypnotic subjects. Their presence is shown, too, in such phenomena as automatic writing—foolishly taken as communications from the spirit world —and in crystal gazing. It is these buried experiences recalled from that world of the unconscious, or sub-conscious, which in the hands of the new psycho-analytic school have become so fruitful an instrument of psychological investigation, and have borne such excellent results in the treatment of nervous disorders. This "unconscious" is not merely there,

it is always making its presence felt. In fact, as Wundt puts it: "Ultimate psychic processes show that the unconscious is the theatre of the most important mental phenomena. The conscious is always conditioned by the unconscious." Our conscious mental life bears about the same relation to the total mental life as the ripple on the surface of a stream does to its depth.

The actions of the normal individual thus show a complete synthesis, a perfect association. Perhaps the word "ideal" would be more appropriate than "normal," for, as a matter of fact, even in what we call normal life the synthesis is very often broken. Of this Freud, in his *Psycho-pathology of Everyday Life*, gives numerous examples. None of these need detain us here, except to note that these breaks create what is known as dissociation. To make the idea of dissociation plain we may picture consciousness as constituting a smoothly flowing stream of "awareness," but accompanied by a deeper stream below consciousness. So long as what rises into consciousness is easily assimilated, there is no break, and the personality remains without noticeable change. But if the emergence of the stream below consciousness be of an abrupt character, or of a kind that refuses to be assimilated, the intruding group of complexes act, so to speak, on their own account, and we have a fresh personality showing itself. One can only present a rough and ready picture of the nature of dissociation, as in the present state of our knowledge the machinery of the process is not quite clear. It may be that it is due to the dropping of certain of the completely synthesised states, which leaves the others free to

function, or it may leave them free to form new combinations. But the fact of dissociation is plain. Forgetting a name is what one may call a very normal case of dissociation. We try with all our might to recall it, but fail. And it is worthy of special note that the more we try to recover it, generally, the less we succeed. Normally, we get it better by a process of abstraction, which may be taken to represent an example of ordinary automatism. Substantially, cases of dissociation may be described as the carrying on of mental processes resulting in definite action, of which the normal personality is usually unconscious. At any rate, the fact remains that under certain conditions there may arise spontaneously, or there may be induced under hypnotism (suggestion) a manifestation of character which differs in a more or less decided manner from the one with which we are acquainted normally.

A classical example of dissociation is that of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, as given by Professor James (*Principles of Psychology*, vol. I. pp. 391-3). Ansel Bourne was brought up as a carpenter, but at the age of thirty became an itinerant preacher. During a great part of his life he suffered from headaches, and had experienced a few fits of unconsciousness lasting an hour or less. He was known and respected for his high character. On January 17, 1887, he left home to draw some money from the bank for the purpose of paying off a mortgage. He then disappeared, and all attempts to find him failed. But about three months later a man at Norristown, Pennsylvania, who called himself A. J. Brown, and had rented a small shop for carrying on a fruit and confectionery trade, woke

up in a fright and asked the people around to tell him where he was. He said that his name was Ansel Bourne, that he belonged to Providence, and the last he remembered was drawing some money from the bank. Enquiries established the truth of the story and Mr. Bourne returned home. There the matter, for a time, ended. The next thing was to discover what had become of the " Brown " personality. For a time all attempts in this direction failed. But some three years later Professor James induced Mr. Bourne to submit to hypnotism. The " Brown " memory soon manifested itself. In spiritualistic jargon, the " control " had returned. The second personality was ignorant of Mr. Bourne, but he told the experimenters all he did, and they were thus able to reconstruct the whole story from the time that Mr. Bourne drew the money from the bank to his coming to himself in the small shop in Norristown. The whole thing, says James, " was prosaic enough, and the Brown personality appears to be a rather shrunken, dejected, and amnesic extract of Mr. Bourne himself." It is clear that we have a quite naturalistic, even materialistic, explanation of this case, and also that in the hands of a confirmed Spiritualist we should have had a most circumstantial account of the way in which someone from " Summerland " had controlled Mr. Bourne.

Cases of dual and multiple personality are very numerous, and they well illustrate all, or nearly all, the phenomena that we meet in connection with trance mediumship. They also throw light upon the question of the trickery which is so often manifested in connection therewith, without this trickery being the

product of the medium's normal consciousness. One instance of the pranks of this secondary personality has been given in the case of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, but the case of "Helene Smith," as described by Professor Flourney, illustrates another aspect of the same phenomenon. Helene Smith had been a quiet, dreamy sort of a child, having occasional visions, but in other respects appearing quite normal. Just before she was thirty years of age she was induced to attend a spiritualistic circle and soon displayed all the characteristic phenomena of mediumship. She was "controlled" by a number of famous personages, but her most striking case occurred when her spirit travelled to Mars. She gave Professor Flourney a very circumstantial account of the inhabitants of the planet, their habits, dwellings, etc., and even went to the length of constructing the elements of a Martian language. It was the kind of performance that would have sent Sir Arthur Conan Doyle into ecstasies of admiration, and would have been more convincing even than his photographs of faries. Unfortunately for the spiritualistic theory, Professor Flourney was made of different stuff. He analysed the case at great length, side by side with an examination of the subject's history. As a result he was able to show that all Helene Smith was doing was reproducing by means of automatic writing the products of her reading and day dreaming for years past. Even the Martian language was modelled, as might be expected, on the French tongue. Had the subject been English the Martians would have spoken a different language. It should be pointed out that there was no suggestion of conscious imposture on the part of the normal Helene Smith. The investigator

was simply dealing with the tricky, dramatizing, secondary personality.

Hypnotic subjects provide numerous cases of dual personality, and, indeed, hypnotism is one of the commonest methods of tapping the whole region of the unconscious. Professor Janet's case, Leonie, is a well-known one in this connection. In her normal self she is described as a serious and rather sad person, very slow in her movements, and timid in manner. When hypnotised an entirely different character is manifested. She is gay, noisy, and restless, and is described as possessing an enormous number of recollections of people and places. In this state Professor Janet was able to distinguish three distinct personalities, described as Leonie 1, Leonie 2, and Leonie 3. Finally, we may cite the celebrated case of "Miss Beauchamp," as described by Dr. Morton Prince.[4] Miss Beauchamp came to Dr. Prince for professional treatment in 1898, and in the course of his experience of the case Dr. Prince was able to clearly define and to trace the devolopment of three distinct personalities. Each of these appeared to live its own life, with its own cluster of memories, and each showed on its re-appearance the persistency of characteristics such as is manifested by the ordinary medium when the "controls" show themselves. There was not in this case the slightest suggestion of spirit intercourse. The manifesting personality simply referred to itself in the same way as does a normal personage, but it is quite clear that had this case been in the hands of a Spiritualist

[4] *The Dissociation of a Personality; A Biographical Study in Abnormal Psychology*, 1910.

we should have had all the usual jargon inflicted on us. In a further study of the case, contributed to *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology* for September, 1920, Dr. Prince goes into a detailed examination of the symptoms, tracing the origin of these secondary personalities, and from a study of Miss Beauchamp's life decides that they were a reversion to the complexes and reactions of her early years, a recrudescence of sentiments long suppressed, with the addition of perceptions and thoughts that had gathered round them. The building up of these personalities is discussed, and not the least interesting part of the article is the information that he eventually healed the psychological fracture, and that the intruding characters were laid to rest.

It is not necessary to further multiply cases. They are all marked by certain broad features. To begin with, there is, in the absence of suggestion from those around, no pretence on the part of the secondary personality that it is anything but what it is. But there is a great readiness to take suggestions and to act on them, and there is a carrying on from one appearance to the next of the experience gained. In relation to the subject's normal power there is considerable dramatic talent, which enables it to act up to the character it takes on, but always in terms of previous knowledge. That is why we are quite certain that some of the Red Indian spirits we have come across have never sat round a camp fire, and that the philosophers we have conversed with would have greatly benefitted by attendance at a course of popular University Extension lectures. Next, the secondary personality emerges and is re-absorbed into the main stream of conscious-

ness, or suppressed, a phenomenon that is quite in accord with the theory of dissociation, but hardly in line with that of Spiritualism. There is also, it is important to note, during these manifestations an excessive sensibilty of certain of the senses (hyper-æsthesia) which may enable the subject to detect sights or sounds not appreciated under normal conditions, and at the same time there may be a dulling of certain senses (amnesia) which leaves the person incapable of reacting to special stimuli. These are also well marked symptoms of the hypnotic state. Finally, there are pronounced automatisms, the better known and the ones with which we are now chiefly concerned being automatic writing and crystal gazing.[5]

[5] One set of conditions making for dissociation is thus described by Dr. Prince : "Particular emotional states, like fear or anxiety, or general mental distress, have the tendency to disintegrate the mental organization in such a way that the normal associations become severed or loosened. Thus it happens that a mental shock like that of an accident, or an alarming piece of news, produces a dissociation of the mind known as a state of hysteria or 'traumatic neurosis.' Such states are characterized by persisting loss of sensation, paralysis, amnesia, and the so-called stigmata, which are now recognized to be manifestations of the dissociation of sensory, motor, or other images from the main stream of consciousness. A doubling of consciousness is thus brought about. The dissociated images may still be capable of functioning, more or less independently of the waking consciousness, and when they do, so-called automatic phenomena (hallucinations, tics, spasms, contractures, etc.) result. Sometimes the mental dissociation produces a complete loss of memory for long periods of the subject's life; when this is the case we have the fundamental basis for alternating personalities, of which this study will offer many examples.....Finally, when the neurasthenic systems have been repeatedly awakened by an

Now, to anyone who reflects on what has been said, it will be plain that we have here a substantial explanation of the phenomena that meet us in trance mediumship. It will also explain why so few medical men or psychologists who are familiar with the proper lines of investigation give their support to the Spiritualistic hypothesis. I may well put the position in a rather lengthy quotation from Professor James:—

> In "mediumships" or "possession" the invasion and the passing away of the secondary state are both relatively abrupt, and the duration of the state is relatively short, *i.e.*, from a few minutes to a few hours. Whenever the secondary state is well developed no memory for aught that happened during it remains after the primary consciousness comes back. The subject during the secondary consciousness speaks, writes, or acts as if animated by a foreign person and gives his history. In old times the foreign "control" was usually a demon, and is so now in communities that favour that belief. With us he gives himself out at the worst for an Indian or other grotesquely speaking but harmless personage. Usually he purports to be the spirit of a

emotion, they form a habit, or what I have called an association neurosis" (*Dissociation*, p. 22). Again, "It was shown that in hypnosis the memories of past experiences were associated among themselves, systematized, and preserved, as if in the memory of a second personality. Janet, experimenting still further.....showed that the lost memories could be recovered in the waking state by the process of abstraction and automatic writing. The memorial images, therefore, were not obliterated, but were merely dissociated from the waking personality. It required only a device to awaken the systematized memories, dissociated from the personal consciousness" (p. 259).

dead person known or unknown to those present, and the subject is then what we call a "medium." Mediumistic possession in all its grades seems to form a perfectly natural special type of alternate personality, and the susceptibility to it in some form is by no means an uncommon gift in persons who have no other obvious nervous anomaly. The phenomena are very intricate, and are only just beginning to be studied in a proper scientific way. The lowest phase of mediumship is automatic writing, and the lowest grade of that is where the subject knows what words are coming, but feels impelled to write them as if from without. Then comes writing unconsciously, even while engaged in reading or talk. Inspirational speaking, playing on musical instruments, etc., also belong to the relatively lower phases of possession, in which the normal self is not excluded from conscious participation in the performance, though their initiative seems to come from elsewhere. In the highest phase the trance is complete, the voice, language, and everything are changed, and there is no after memory whatever till the next trance comes. One curious thing about trance utterances is their generic similarity in different individuals. The "control" here in America is either a grotesque, slangy, and flippant personage.....or if he ventures on higher flights, he abounds in a curiously vague optimistic philosophy-and-water, in which phrases about spirit, harmony, beauty, law, progression, development, etc., keep recurring. It seems exactly as if one author composed more than half of the trance messages, no matter by whom they are uttered. Whether all subconscious selves are peculiarly susceptible to a certain stratum of the *Zeitgeist*, and get their inspiration from it, I know not, but this is obviously the case with the secondary selves which have developed

in spiritualistic circles. There the beginnings of the medium trance are indistinguishable from the effects of hypnotic suggestion. The subject assumes the role of a medium simply because opinion expects it of him under the conditions which are present; and carries it out with a feebleness or a vivacity proportionate to his histrionic gifts (*Principles of Psychology*, vol. i. pp. 393-4).

In his *Science and a Future Life*, Dr. Hyslop, while giving a general support to the spiritualistic theory, admits that the "fundamental point" in which the assumed "control" fails to establish itself is its inability to give facts which will prove the identity of the supposed communicating spirit. "It may," he says, "invent incidents to stimulate this effect, but it fails in anything but guessing, chance coincidence, fishing, and response to suggestion." Anyone with experience of mediums will endorse this, and if the person to whom the communications are given were to remain perfectly silent while the medium is talking, sitting in perfect quietude, without any physical contact with the medium, the failure to give exact information would be more striking than it is. And Dr. Hyslop adds that—

> There is such an enormous mass of phenomena that is undoubtedly the result of secondary personality, and so many more that are explicable by it, that the medium who gives evidence of the supernormal is very rare.....The layman is not aware of the tremendous difficulties involved in the quantity and quality of the matter that is produced and producible by secondary personality, that can neither be attributed to spirits nor demands explanation by fraud.

I can quite agree with Dr. Hyslop in this, and also when he says that a secondary personality can no more inculpate a medium with fraud than can a somnambulist or dreamer. I have tried to make it plain that it is on this point that the ordinary critic of spiritualism goes so woefully astray. But in this matter the uninformed character of his criticism is quite equalled by the want of knowledge of the majority of spiritualists whose conviction of the truth of Spiritualism rests upon exactly the kind of evidence which, in truth, proves nothing of the kind. It is quite certain that if the mass of spiritualists were aware that the phenomena with which they are familiar in their own homes are explainable on the lines above indicated, and that the messages which they receive, and which are really independent of the medium's normal consciousness, were no more than an illustration of those automatisms which belong to the dissociated state, the number of professing spiritualists would not be greater than the believers in a flat earth.

I may take to illustrate this the case of the celebrated medium, Mrs. Piper, and her "control," Dr. Phinuit, who figured so largely in Sir Oliver Lodge's experience. According to the account given by Dr. Phinuit he was, when on earth, a doctor, born about 1790 in Marseilles. He studied medicine there and also at "Metz, in Germany." He married but left no children. One would have thought that in this case it might have been possible to have established some proof of his actual existence. But although invited over and over again to prove his identity, he has never been able to do so. On the other hand, his knowledge of French appears to be limited to a few common

phrases; he does not know the Latin or French names of the few drugs he prescribed through Mrs. Piper, and when pressed he became uncertain as to whether he was really born at Marseilles, or whether his name might not be Alæn instead of Phinuit—this latter was the result of a suggestion from Dr. Hodgson. It is not surprising that Dr. Hyslop comes to the conclusion that Dr. Phinuit must be treated as a creation of Mrs. Piper's secondary consciousness, particularly as the knowledge of French and of drugs displayed does not appear beyond the medium's capacity. And Sir Oliver Lodge, with a very evident desire to find Dr. Phinuit a genuine existence, is yet forced to conclude that he "may or may not be a phase of Mrs. Piper's existence" (*The Survival of Man*, 5th ed., p. 262). It is something to have got so far. It is an advance to have got the fact of these spirits being no more than a product of the medium as a recognized possibility. From a possibility we may advance to a probability, and then to a certainty. That is the normal way of development from superstition to science. We have seen the same thing in the case of witchcraft, where we had first the genuineness of witches asserted, then a discussion as to fraud *versus* delusion, and finally, the establishment of its real nature in terms of nervous derangement and the play of the social environment.

The important thing to note is that once this secondary personality has shown itself, it can be watched in the act of elaboration. Thus, in one of Janet's cases, the subject, making no claim whatever to be a discarnate spirit, accepted the name of "Blanche" from the operator. After that it acted as though the name belonged to her, building up a

character from hints and suggestions supplied. Again, Ribot in his *Diseases of Memory* gives us the case of a servant girl who every evening fancied herself to be a bishop, of a poor servant who imagined himself to be a millionaire, and in each case the normal and the abnormal personality were quite independent of each other. Those who have attended many circles must have also come across Irish spirits who lived up to the medium's conception of the way in which Irishmen lived and talked, or of sailors who were never seen out of a cheap magazine or off the stage of a theatre. Some years ago there were quite a large number of Red Indian controls. Why there should be a surplus of Red Indian spirits ready to communicate it is difficult to see, but when we remember that modern Spiritualism came to this country from America the mystery begins to approach solution. The creation of these stage characters received an amusing illustration in the case of Mrs. Piper, who not only received a communication from George Eliot, but also from *Adam Bede*. Novelists have often been complimented in creating characters that live, but Marian Evens is the first who has ever created one that has come back again from the next world to deliver a message.

A word or two needs to be said on the subject of automatic writing and kindred phenomena. Automatic writing is one of the commonest accompaniments of dissociation, and, indeed, in an elementary form is so common that it appears in connection with those who would hardly deserve to be called abnormal. A great many people with a pencil in their fingers if they allow their hand to rest on a piece of paper will commence to

make marks with the pencil without their being very much alive to what they are doing. And a little practice will enable them to write sentences with as much detachment as a regular performer on the piano will run through a tune while his mind is consciously engaged in some disconnected mental operation. And as the abnormal is never more than an extension of the normal, we may see here one of the simplest indications of dissociation. It is also noticable that those who are advanced in the art of automatic writing have all, so far as the recorded cases go, commenced by very tentative efforts, advancing from a mere undecipherable scrawl to regular and related sentences. Mrs. Verrall, a lady of whose honesty there is not, I think, the least question, tells us that before she took to automatic writing she had for long indulged in crystal gazing, and had published a series of observations on her experience. She was thus in the habit of tapping her unconscious self, that reservoir of buried memories and experiences. She commenced her efforts at automatic writing by sitting regularly with a pencil between her fingers. For some time nothing happened beyond the fact that she would unconsciously trace some words of the book she was reading. Then she began to write sentences in Latin, at first without any general sense, but more connectedly as she proceeded. She followed this up by writing in Greek and Latin, being well acquainted with both languages. But in no case was there anything written that could be said to be outside the range of her knowledge, past or present. And that is the case with all dependable cases of automatic writing with which I am acquainted. The more complete the investigation is the more definite becomes

the evidence that the writer is simply tapping the store of past experiences which he or she possesses.

A good illustration of what has been said above is given in Dr. Wilfrid Lay's *Man's Unconscious Spirit* (1921), pp. 312-14. In this case a young lady began with the Ouija board. After getting a number of messages of no particular importance she enquired who was the intelligence controlling. "Rob Taylor" was the reply. He also said that he lived at the Yorktown Hotel. Miss X called at the hotel, and much to her surprise found out that they knew him. Asking for further proof of this spirit's existence she was told to look in a dark corner of the room and saw a tall figure with a soft hat and Van Dyke beard. She next went to a friend of Taylor's, who showed her some portraits of him, and she was able to pick out the picture of the man she had seen. Later the "spirit" gave her instructions to go to a chemist and get a certain powder with which to clean a copper tray. It is called, said the automatic message, "Liv—" the rest of the name could not be read. Calling at the chemist the assistant recalled the fact that Rob Taylor was in the habit of getting a preparation called Liver of Sulphur. Here then, was an accumulation of proofs. Miss X said that she did not know Rob Taylor, yet she picked out his picture, after seeing the vision of him, and got from the chemist the name of the powder he was in the habit of using. It was a case over which a man like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would go into raptures, and the unscientific opponent of Spiritualism would be equally ready with stories of fraud or information derived through some Spiritualistic Information Bureau.

The real explanation lay in quite a different direction. She was induced to submit to hypnotization in order to further probe the matter. Under hypnosis she recalled three separate incidents which she had completely forgotten, and which threw a vivid light on the whole subject. First, there was the reading in a newspaper of the death of Rob Taylor, which gave his portrait, stated that he was an art worker, and mentioned that he lived in the Yorktown Hotel. The second resurrected memory was that of being in the Yorktown Hotel to dinner and noticing in the lobby a striking looking man with soft hat and Van Dyke beard. On asking who it was she was told it was Rob Taylor. The third memory was that of some copper work being done at school, and that one of the chemicals used was Liver of Sulphur. As Dr. Lay says, "The automatic writing was thus entirely explained. Every bit of information that she got from the 'spirit' and that was so dramatically corroborated was in her own unconscious mental storehouse, and was released through her automatic writing. Every bit of it was accounted for. Among other things, Dr. Q looked for and found the very newspaper account of Rob Taylor's death."

Crystal gazing comes under the same general head. Here, again, we normally practise it in the species of mental abstraction by the aid of which we attempt to recover some forgotten episode. But a single example from Dr. Coriat's *Abnormal Psychology* must suffice here. He says:—

> One day I had occasion to refer to some notes which I had made in the course of preparation for a certain technical paper. Prolonged search failed to discover

these notes, although I distinctly remembered having made these notes on a particular kind of blue paper. It then occurred to me that perhaps it would be interesting to see if by means of crystal gazing I could find any trace of the lost notes. The result was distinctly interesting and successful. I distinctly saw myself in the crystal, sitting at my desk, and caught myself in the act of tearing up these particular notes in connection with some other data which I had finished using, and throwing the pieces into the waste-paper basket. A search in the basket discovered the lost and torn notes, which I was able to piece together. Now the tearing of these notes was evidently an absent-minded act; and yet an act which was fully preserved in the unconscious and later fully reproduced through the technical device of crystal gazing.

There is no need to elaborate. I am only outlining a subject, not exhausting it. I have said enough to show that there is not the slightest need to assume the action of departed spirits to account for what meets us in Spiritualistic circles. Mental pathologists have for long been familiar with the genuine part of what occurs, and for the rest, the exposure of the many acts of deliberate trickery is enough. I will only add here that those who wish to read a convincing and detailed account of the evolution of a medium would do well to study closely a most illuminating chapter in C. G. Jung's *Analytic Psychology*, where in the course of about one hundred pages he describes both the development and decay of a medium under the title of "The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena."[6]

[6] The literature bearing on this subject is very great, but I

I am bringing this chapter to a close by a few random, but I hope pertinent, considerations of the Spiritualistic theory in the light of what has already been said. The triviality of the alleged communications received from the next world has been often commented on, and justly so. Apart from the value of the proof they would give, if genuine, of the existence of another world, I do not know of a single communication that has ever been given that has been worth the trouble of receiving. There is much talk in Spiritualistic circles of progress and development, but if we are to go by the talk of the supposed spirits it is altogether non-existent. If one will take up any of the published volumes of spirit communications from famous people whose works we have, the striking thing about them is their extreme inanity. In a work before me,[7] there are contained fifty-six communications from men and women such as George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, G. H. Lewes, Dickens, De Quincey, Gambetta, Darwin, etc., and one is aghast at the deterioration that has set in since they left this

would suggest to those who have a desire to follow the subject further the following. First read a valuable little work by Dr. Hart, *The* Psychology *of Insanity,* published by the Cambridge University Press. Then, not necessarily in the order named, *Abnormal* Psychology, by I. Coriat; *Multiple* Personality, by Boris Sidis; *The* Psychology *of Suggestion,* same author; *The Newer Spiritualism,* by F. Podmore; Freud's Psychopathology *of Every-day Life; Freud's Theories of the Neuroses,* by Dr. E. Hitschmann; Papers *on* Psycho-Analysis, by Dr. Jones; *The Freudian Wish,* by E. B. Holt, and *Spiritualism and the New* Psychology, by Dr. Millais Culpin.

[7] *The Next World: Fifty-six Communications from Eminent Historians, Authors, etc., through Mrs. Susan G. Horn,* 1890.

world. They all write in the same tone, they all make use of much the same expressions, and not one of them seems able to dictate a sentence that is above the capacity of a Sunday-school teacher. The dead level of mediocrity is appalling. When they died they not only stopped growing, they must also have stopped thinking. The great scientist here makes no discoveries there, beyond meaningless chatter about unknown forces. The historian throws no light on any of the subjects he debated so hotly while on earth, and which he might so easily settle by consulting the principal parties concerned. In the whole history of Spiritualism it is left for the people on earth to make the discoveries, and for the spirits to indulge in columns of useless verbiage about the greatness of the human mind—and disprove it in themselves.

The Spiritualistic explanation of this curious fact that the communications are conditioned by the mentality of the medium only adds to the absurdity. It says little for the mentality of the average medium if the messages received represent the limits of their brain power. Moreover, if the spirits can move the hands of a medium so as to transmit a message of which he is unconscious, or cause him to write in an unknown tongue, or to write about matters unknown to him, why cannot mediums write about matters of scientific or historic interest that are unknown to them? After all, it is the formation of a series of letters that is important here, not the sense of the message conveyed. It is a matter of complete indifference whether the message that is tapped out on a typewriter is sense or nonsense. The keys will register equally well. And why does not that hold

good with regard to the medium who stands to the spirits exactly as my typewriter stands to me? The results are quite inconsistent with the theory of Spiritualism; they are quite consistent with the theory I have been describing. It is again in accordance with the facts of morbid psychology, but difficult to reconcile with the Spiritualistic theory, why mediums should usually have a constant control or a very limited number. If they are expressions of the medium's sub-consciousness this is what we should expect, otherwise it would seem that with so many billions of departed spirits there should be endless variety in the visitors who return. In this connection we may note the suggestibility of the medium. In the case of "Dr. Phinuit," suggestion after suggestion was taken up and repeated in subsequent sittings. In my own experience I have noticed how receptive are both the mediums and the cases of dissociation that I have come across. This is also pointed out by Dr. Maxwell who, in his *Metapsychical Phenomena*, remarks that he has seen a medium who professes that an actual spirit was controlling her, and at another time resolves the spirit into an impersonal force. This will explain why those who are experimenting with mediums so often get what they are expecting. Mr. Podmore properly remarks that "automatic utterances, and especially the trance utterances, show all the characteristics of automatic utterances generally, incoherence, vagueness, ambiguity, evasiveness." Once more we fall into line with those abnormal states on which the whole thing seems to hang.

Another thing overlooked by the Spiritualist is that an explanation which is to be accepted by anyone with a

due regard to scientific procedure, must cover all the facts and not merely a selected few. Now, assuming that the Spiritualistic explanation covers all those cases where the medium is right, what are we to do with those cases where the medium is demonstrably wrong? When, to take one instance out of many, the medium describes correctly the appearance of the spirit of someone who is dead, that is to be taken as proof that the dead live again. But when the medium describes as dead someone who is still living, what then? Clearly the explanation that the thing seen is a genuinely objective existence will not fit both cases. And if not both, why either? Why may it not be that we are dealing in both cases with suggestion or guessing, or a combination of mistakes? The irrelevancy, even the absurdity, of the assurance by either the medium or the medium's friends that she is speaking of things that are beyond her knowledge will be realized when it is remembered that it is precisely because these things are beyond the medium's memory that they take the form they do. It has been shown over and over again that an experience once gained is seldom lost beyond the possibility of revivability. We are all of us continually running up against the sense of having experienced a thing previously without being able to locate time or place. In the majority of cases these experiences are not of a very striking kind, but, here again, the normal shades very gradually into the abnormal, and in the qualities displayed by the medium we have only an extension of those possessed by the ordinary human being. And there is always the co-operation of pure delusion and illusion.

The question of deliberate fraud is not at this point

of great moment. Indeed, to lead the discussion that way helps rather than hinders the Spiritualist, since it draws a red herring across the track by turning attention in the wrong direction. It is not at all difficult for the Spiritualist who knows his case to prove that the theory of fraud will not cover all the cases, and he is thus able to leave his hearers or readers with the confused feeling that there is, after all, something in it. And so there is, but not what the Spiritualist believes is there. One may put it that the critic has been right in suspecting trickery, but it was not of necessity the trickery of the normal personality. As Jung says, "The more consciousness becomes dissociated, the greater becomes the plasticity of the dream situation, the less becomes the amount of conscious lying" (*Analytic Psychology*, p. 71), and if what has been said is correct it is perfectly idle to accuse the normal personality of deliberate deception on account of things done during a period of dissociation. We have to continually bear in mind the trickiness of the secondary consciousness, its capacity for acting up to a part that has been suggested to it, and the abnormal sensitiveness to certain sounds or sights that exists. We do, indeed, need to be constantly on our guard against trickery, but we also need to be awake to the class of trickery against which we are to guard ourselves.

As already said, I have purposely left the case of the deliberate swindler on one side. My aim has been to show that after eliminating him, or her, and taking what remains as genuine phenomena, there is not the least evidence here for the belief in a future state of existence. The facts upon which the majority of

Spiritualists depend to prove their belief in a future life I think I may claim to have shown can be explained in terms of abnormal psychology. Unfortunately, says Flammarion, "a large number of Spiritualists prefer not to go to the bottom of things, or analyze anything, but to be the dupes of their own impressions. They resemble certain worthy women who tell their beads while believing that they have before them Saint Agnes or Saint Filomena." Spiritualists are for the most part the victims of their own "will to believe," and decline to learn the lesson that experience offers them. When hypnotism began we had it explained in terms of some occult hypnotic fluid, or some magnetic influence, or some mysterious power was supposed to "flow" from the one person to another. More careful examination of the facts showed that it was simple suggestion, and the "occult" disappeared save from the repertory of quacks. Or, if I may use my previous illustration, we are in the position with regard to Spiritualism that our ancestors were with regard to demoniacal possession. Or, again, there were the visions of mediæval saints and mystics. These were real to them, and upon their experience the faith of others was built. Or, in the case of witchcraft, we had from the accused people themselves circumstantial accounts of their experience with devils just as we have to-day the experiences of "mediums" with the denizens of the next world. The differences between all these cases is one of time and environment. In other respects they are identical. And the end to these things came when science took these psychological facts in hand and gave them a rational and a natural explanation. That is where we are, so far as a

large number of people are concerned, with Spiritualism to-day. There is the same substratum of fact distorted by misunderstanding into proof of an impossible life beyond the grave. There is the same fight against an explanation of it in terms of known forces, the same attempt to interpret the unusual, or the ill-understood, in terms of a disguised supernaturalism. As with other forms of religious belief Spiritualism is in this respect true to itself and to type. It can trace an ancestry that carries it right back to the stage of primitive savagery, where we see the same species of misunderstanding at work. That it is so, and that Spiritualism can claim so many supporters to-day offers but one more proof, if any were needed, that our boasted advance has only scratched the surface of things, and that careful scientific thinking, especially where religion is concerned, still remains one of the rarest of mental endowments.

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