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OF

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1923.

650TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W., ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH, 1923,
AT 4.30 P.M.

COULSON KERNAHAN, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed, and the Honorary Secretary announced the election of the following :—
As a Member : Leonard S. Kern, Esq. As Associates : George E. Ardill, Esq., Sydney E. Watson, Esq., Eric J. Starey, Esq., Frederick G. Adkins, Esq., and Miss Marion A. F. Dashwood.

The CHAIRMAN, in introducing Dr. Schofield, said : There are some who think of spiritism as no more than a foolish crank, at worst as a deplorable superstition, which is sometimes associated with fraud. With all my heart I wish that no worse than fraud there were. But I am as positive as one can be positive of anything in this human life of ours, that one at least of the forces behind spiritism is diabolic. I said as much to a lady, a spiritist, the other day, and she laughed contemptuously.

“ That is ridiculous and preposterous,” she said, “ for I am quite sure that there is no such being as a personal devil to tempt us to, or to originate, evil.”

My reply was : “ How clever—how diabolically cunning of him to have succeeded in so persuading you ! ” For in all warfare of the soul, as in all warfare of the body, to persuade one to believe that there is no enemy and no danger, is the surest of all ways to assist that enemy in achieving his fell purpose. It is of the forces behind spiritism that Dr. Schofield is here to speak ; so with no further preliminary word, I have now the pleasure of calling upon him for his address.

THE FORCES BEHIND SPIRITISM.

By ALFRED T. SCHOFIELD, Esq., M.D., &c.

BEFORE directly speaking of the occult forces in spiritism, it will be necessary to state with great brevity what the cult is to-day, to review its history, and also its claims to necromancy. I use the word “ Spiritism ”

here (in common with many spiritists), instead of "Spiritualism," because to me the former word represents the spurious and the evil, the latter the true and the good.* And in making this distinction I must not be accused of hastily pre-judging the case, as my decision has been arrived at after carefully weighing the evidence on both sides for over twenty years. In "spiritism" I have been fortunately placed in knowing personally many of the foremost leaders of the cult, while, being somewhat of a mystic myself, I may be presumed to have some natural bias in its favour. I agree also with one of its latest champions in his recent statement on the Bible, † "that it is the greatest Spiritual Manual in existence," giving as it does, with authority, all we know of the Spirit, the spiritual, the life after death, and the future state.

But I cannot deny that while it unfolds as much as we are now able to bear of these glorious truths, it is full of unsparing condemnation of an evil "spiritism" which seems from its pages, as well as from profane history, to have existed side by side with the true spiritualism throughout the ages of this world's history.

The history of spiritism is indeed a dark and terrible record, and there is abundant evidence as to the unity of the ancient and modern cults. We find throughout the Old Testament the word *owb* (or *obb*) (to mumble), which means a python or soothsaying demon, and is generally translated "familiar spirit." *Kah-sam* means, to direct communications with the dead. *Meonen* is a hypnotist; and there are many other words and varieties.

In the New Testament *φαρμακός* is a sorcerer, and in Gal. v, 20, and Rev. xxi, 8, is coupled with idolatry, which, as Lightfoot points out, shows its demoniacal character. *Μαντεύομαι*, means "to act as seer," "practise divination."

These and many other like words show the hoary and evil history of spiritism, which is but one of the forms of communication with demons. The mortal crime of Israel's first King was "asking counsel of one who had a familiar spirit (*i.e.* a medium), to enquire of it." ‡

* In Conan Doyle's words, the former is The New Revelation; the latter the Christianity it is to replace.

† *The Bible and the After Life*, p. 327, by Walter Wynn, Kingsley Press, E.C. 4.

‡ 1 Chron. x, 13, 14.

Spiritism is not only known to sacred but to profane history a thousand years later. The great shrine at Delphi lasted till four hundred years after Christ, and was essentially "spiritism," which has also ever been a leading feature in all pagan religions. Its history everywhere is mostly fraudulent, evil and devilish. Modern spiritism, bearing, however, the marks of its great antiquity, began in America in 1847, with rappings by two young girls in a Methodist's house at Boston. It was soon discovered that the girls could produce these noises at will by loudly cracking their knee and toe joints; *but this was not the sole agent of the rappings.*

Thus, from the first, we find this nauseous mixture of fraud and *something else*. Spiritism was brought to England in 1852 by paid American mediums, who were aware that over here it must be "very religious and very scientific." I think in both these characters its failure is conspicuous.

Its spread since then has been remarkable. Over twenty years ago in the States twenty-five societies existed, over ten thousand mediums were at work, and eighty-two wealthy churches with spiritist-ordained ministers and Sunday schools flourished.

Over here some scientists have supported it, and strange to say its most active leader to-day is a medical man. Considering that every investigator and spiritist leader, with one dishonourable exception, has earnestly pressed the great danger of the cult to both mediums and audiences, this is a little surprising to his confrères, and much to be regretted. His advice to every young woman to "try and become a medium" is almost incredible.

Spiritism to-day is still, as it ever was, an evil force both inside and outside Christendom.* I have received from Canon Williams in New Zealand a letter speaking of terrible cases of devil-possession under his care. Three were definitely cured by exorcism, and some were in asylums. He also sends the *Waiapu Church Gazette*, which gives detailed evidence of "possession" amongst the Maories, many of whom are accomplished mediums, some becoming raving lunatics. For detailed and thrilling accounts of cures the paper must be consulted.†

In each European country there is a strong party of spiritists determined to make it a religion that shall eventually replace Christianity; while there is a smaller party of scientific men

* See *A Sober Condemnation of Spiritualism*, by Rev. H. Thurston, S.J. (Catholic Truth Society), recommended by Sir Wm. Barrett.

† The *Waiapu Church Gazette*, pp. 298-302, August 2nd, 1920.

who are against any such ideas, and regard occultism purely as a scientific study.

I think I may say that in this country this party is now headed by Sir William Barrett, F.R.S., who points out the fundamental difference between the *ψυχή* and the *πνεῦμα*, spiritism having the former for its sphere, Christianity the latter. He says: "The ground (*re* spiritism) of the Jewish prophets was most wise, but in the New Testament the warnings are somewhat different: 'Try the spirits,' not turn a deaf ear. The spirits seem mainly psychic; that of the Kingdom of God is truly spiritual; and modern spiritism is mainly psychic, while true spiritualism is really spiritual. Every thoughtful and reverent mind must admit the peril to faith in a risen Lord; and there is a destined warning against making a religion of spiritism. To touch psychical phenomena as a branch of science is another matter."*

But the most active leaders in England are determined to make spiritism into what it has already become in America—a recognized religion. A well-known leader says:† "What is this spiritism, and what is this Theosophy, in which the movement is said to have its origin?" "We designate the high ranks (of the departed)—angels, and the lower—evil spirits." "Let us be careful not to lose sight of the fact that they differ only as elder and younger." "There is no room in the universe for an essentially evil thing." "We must reject the conception of fallen creatures." "By the Fall we understand the descent of spirit into matter!"

As spiritism generally now includes re-incarnation there is a great admixture of Swedenborg; but Mr. A. P. Sinnett, the English head of Theosophy, told me he would devote the rest of his life to making Theosophy the religion of spiritism. Sir A. C. Doyle says Christianity must "change or perish." (There can be no doubt, however, to many observers, that it is just in proportion as it has changed that it has perished.) He also observes darkly, "Spiritism is only fatal to one religion." The "Fall," sin, redemption, the Atonement, and Resurrection are all denied and indeed repudiated by spiritists, and specially by a well-known leader,‡ as monstrous.

* See *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, p. 34, Sir William Barrett, F.R.S.

† *The True Light*, pp. 3, 12, 76, 77, etc., by G. G. André, G.F.S., A.M.I.C.E.

‡ Rev. W. Stainton Moses.

It will be recalled by any who are still students of the Bible that St. John says (1 John iv, 3), "Every spirit which confesseth not Jesus, is not of God." To test the spirit of the religion of spiritism I turn, therefore, to its official hymn book and a spiritist hymn sheet,* and observe that in them our most popular hymns, full of Christ and Salvation, are to be found—by Faber, Fanny Crosbie and others—mutilated beyond recognition without any apology, by the entire omission from cover to cover of the Name of Jesus, of redemption, of salvation, of the Cross, etc. For most Christians I think this is enough.

It must be clearly understood that spiritism not only denies evil, but recognizes no spirits in the other world but human. Angelic beings do not exist, but are simply departed spirits of men. This being accepted shuts out, necessarily, all devils, fallen angels, evil spirits of any sort. Hence it is clear that in what follows, where I assume their existence according to the Word of God, I do not address myself to orthodox spiritists as such, for they deny my premise, on which is based my conclusion.

Before, however, proceeding to adduce some evidences of the character of the forces behind spiritism, I ought first to point out that any evidence of these forces is absent in from fifty to ninety per cent. of the public séances held; which, alas! being closely connected with "the root of all evil," are steeped in fraud of all sorts, much of which has been successfully exposed by conjurers. Indeed most mediums have been convicted of fraud, which is sometimes so subtle as to deceive the leaders themselves, as one of them† owned the other day before a London magistrate. If, however, spiritism were all fraud, this paper would not have been written. It is solely because, in a small proportion of spiritist séances, there is something more seen‡ that attention is now called to the subject.

We must remember that the declared object of spiritism is necromancy or communication with the dead; and during the war large numbers attended séances solely for this purpose. The letters I have received have shown how cruelly numbers

* *The Spiritualists' Hymnal*, 150 hymns, Maclure, Macdonald & Co., Glasgow.

† Sir A. C. Doyle.

‡ We refer here only to what is obvious; there is much that is not.

of war-mothers were thus deceived, and Kipling's powerful poem on the subject should be read by all.*

“ O, the road to Endor is the oldest road
 And the craziest road of all !
 Straight it runs to the witch's abode,
 As it did in the days of Saul ;
 And nothing has changed of the sorrow in store
 For such as go down on the road to Endor.”

Although the incident is well known to many, I must not leave this part of my subject without recording the determined effort to establish beyond question the truth of necromancy made by the well-known psychologist, F. W. H. Myers,† who was President of the Psychical Research Society (known everywhere as the S.P.R.) in 1900, established under Lord Balfour and others for investigating occult phenomena. Myers rightly felt it a great reproach to spiritism that communication with the dead had so far never been scientifically proved, and determined to do so himself. He therefore wrote a long letter on a difficult point of science, sealed it in an envelope, and gave it into the care of Sir Oliver Lodge, with strict injunctions not to allow the envelope to be opened until he communicated the contents of the letter through some medium after his death. Sir Oliver Lodge had the letter placed at once in the safe of a Birmingham bank, and Mr. Myers died, with the fixed determination to thus establish necromancy, shortly after, on January 17th, 1901. Sir Oliver Lodge waited impatiently for the promised communication, but as he himself tells us,‡ nothing coming through, he consulted Mrs. Thompson, a professional medium, and was told she was now in touch with F. W. H. Myers, and according to Sir Oliver Lodge the following conversation took place after some preliminary greetings :—

Sir O.L. : “ Do you want to say anything about the Society ? ” (Myers had been President of the S.P.R. within three weeks of his death.)

F.W.H.M. : “ What Society ? ”

Sir O.L. : “ You remember, the S.P.R. ? ”

F.W.H.M. : “ Do not think I've forgotten ; but I have forgotten just now. Let me think.”

* *The Road to Endor*, by Rudyard Kipling.

† The distinguished author of *St. Paul*.

‡ *The Survival of Man*, p. 287, etc., Sir Oliver Lodge.

He then complained of becoming breathless, and postponed further conversation till April. Sir Oliver Lodge, however, determined to persevere.

Sir O.L. : " Will you then read what is in the envelope ? "

F.W.H.M. : " What envelope ? "

And so it goes on—it being perfectly clear there was no communication with F.W.H.M. at all. Had the communications agreed, in the light of present advances* in clairvoyance and telepathy, the fact of necromancy would not have been established scientifically beyond question.

Four years after, however, the spiritist world was convulsed with the news that at last F. W. H. Myers had communicated the contents of the sealed letter through Mrs. Verrall, of Cambridge. A special meeting of the S.P.R. was at once called in Hanover Square, and Mrs. Verrall attended, and Sir Oliver Lodge brought up at last the sealed letter from the Birmingham bank. All now believed that the truth of necromancy was to be proved. Mrs. Verrall first gave in full her scientific communication from F. W. H. Myers ; and then at last the seal was broken, and it was found that there was *no correspondence whatever* with the letter, which was on a totally different subject. This was a terrible blow, and it can be well understood the subject is never alluded to in spiritist circles. Ten years after this again, the President of the S.P.R. was asked, " Is there yet any authentic communication from F. W. H. Myers ? " and he regretted to say there was not. And yet all the time anyone who paid the fees could get into touch with his supposed spirit, and I, myself, have heard remarkable (false) statements supposed to come from him. So much for necromancy : and now for the three forces behind spiritism.

1. I will begin with the greatest, as seen in the entrance of Christianity into Europe, which forms a remarkable and instructive spiritist drama. As soon as Paul and Silas landed in Europe to preach the good news of the Cross, a most subtle spiritist opposition awaited them which might well have wrecked their whole testimony. For an attractive soothsaying damsel, possessed, however, with a python (*i.e.* a medium, with an evil spirit as her " control "), met them with poisoned praises of the

* See annual volumes of S.P.R. since then.

men and their message—a fatal trap for the unwary. “These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” Paul, however, in the power of the Spirit, was not deceived; but, addressing himself directly to the possessing demon, in the Name of Jesus Christ cast the devil out of the damsel. With this her power (no mere conjuring) went; and we thus get our first glimpse of the chief power behind spiritism, which is distinctly devilish.

It has been my lot, though not in mental practice, to meet with four well-marked cases of possession with evil spirits. I have been asked by spiritist leaders, “Why assume these spirits are evil?”—And my reply is, “Because their fruits show it;* and also because they are found in a system that officially denies Christ and His Salvation.” Moreover, possession with the good Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is well known to Christians, and its fruits are the very opposite of those in spiritism, for the Name of Jesus is here exalted above every name, and all is pure and holy. Moreover the language, immorality and obscenity of these demons is absolutely of the pit; and it is a horrid libel on humanity to suggest that such are departed spirits of men. They are not. They are similar to those referred to by the Lord’s brother (Jude, 6) as the spirits in prison,† guilty of unnatural sins as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and forming one of the most absorbing and amazing subjects of study in the Word of God. Their object is clearly to enter and possess, for evil, human bodies. The limits of this paper forbid a history of the “Geborim” here.‡ The following cases of possession are known to me:—

- (1) I had a quiet elderly patient, who dabbled in the occult and became possessed. For his safety I put him with a medical man in a small house at Henley with two trained male asylum nurses, men that nothing should shock. And yet so awful was the language that came out of his mouth, that both gave me notice, declaring that no money could make them endure what “came direct from hell.”

* Their *words* are often as pious as those of the devils in the Gospels.

† See 1 Peter iii, 19.

‡ The extraordinary reticence with which the whole subject is treated in Scripture, both at the Deluge and in Canaan, is to me a strong proof of the restraining hand of the Holy Spirit.

- (2) I knew two refined sisters in Paddington, one of whom exposed herself to the entrance of evil, and I was called to her bedroom to find her sister weeping by the bed, while the most horrible obscenities and bitter blasphemies were poured out of the lips of this pure and God-fearing woman.
- (3) A third case was a noble lady in Bavaria, married to the son of one of my publishers. One day, through spiritist influences, she became possessed, and at a luncheon ceased her gentle, sweet conversation, and in a hoarse man's voice, began to pour out language absolutely unprintable. Her friends at once sent for the leading alienists, but she was soon her sweet self again, and one and all declared she was sane—but possessed. This devil was cast out after two years by united prayer.
- (4) The fourth I met at the Holborn Restaurant, brought there by a medical man. He had begun by spirit rapping, etc., until at last, on one fatal day all the raps ceased, and the voice came from within. He was an Arab nobleman who had come to England solely to have this devil "cast out." He told me of his horrible sufferings and temptations to evil.*

This "possession," which used to be rare, is now quite common with the increase of spiritism; and mediums under a "control" are often possessed by a spirit that is non-human, and to my mind always evil,† and sometimes, as I have shown, devilish. There is reason also to believe that those under the power of these "controls" are found far beyond the recognized borders of spiritism, and can be detected by the remarkable character of the animus shown and the language used, which far exceeds the wishes or capacity of the human agency employed.

Obviously this is a subject that can hardly be treated in a paper, nor is it always directly traceable to spiritism as such. But the days in which we live are "perilous times" in more senses than one, and I would urge upon my Christian audience the extreme necessity now of cleaving closely to the simple

* Freud and Yung have tried to explain such states by physiology, but I do not accept it in these cases.

† Though often posing as the reverse and using the most beautiful language.

faith of the Gospels, and refusing all the fancy cults that are offered us to-day in such bewildering variety!

It is a comfort after such thoughts to read the sober words of John Bunyan in "The Holy War": "For here is the excellent wisdom of him that built Mansoul; that the walls could never be broken down by the most mighty adverse potentate, unless the townsmen gave consent thereto."

The forces behind spiritism are, as I have said, three in number, and the chiefest which I have described is the one denounced throughout Scripture; and while by far the worst, is perhaps the easiest to recognize, partly perhaps because of its complete contrast to the Holy Spirit.

"Be not drunken with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit"; and the lovely result of this possession is "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart unto the Lord."*

2. The next force is much more obscure, but not the less real, and in my opinion is also "super-" or I would rather say "non-" human.

The series of manifestations of this (obscure) force are much less terrible in their character and effects than the first. They are best described as freakish, sometimes comical, always trivial and utterly useless; and indeed these are so often imitated fraudulently by conjuring and other means, that many thoughtful people deny them *in toto*. Close skilled observations, however, by Sir William Crookes, Sir William Barrett and others, as well as the evidence of the Rev. S. Moses, generally known as the uncorrupt medium, D. D. Home, Maeterlinck,† etc., satisfy me as to the fact that many of these manifestations are genuine, and point to the existence of a non-human force at present unknown to us. Professor Flammarion, of Paris, says the phenomenon of levitation is to many absolutely proved, though it cannot be explained.

In 1906, at the Psychological Institute in Paris, a heavy table was lifted twenty inches from the ground by two people placing their hands upon it. Professor Lombroso also testifies to floating and moving furniture. Sir William Barrett in conjunction with Dr. Crawford (Professor at Belfast College), at a private séance in the house of the latter, saw a table strike the floor with tremendous force, and then rise eighteen inches into the air; he

* Eph. v, 18.

† *Our Unknown Guest*, Maeterlinck.

tried to push it down in vain. Dr. Crawford then climbed up on the table, and it floated with him round the room. In his own house in Dublin,* Sir William got loud raps, like electric discharges, from a table four feet square, with no one near. Then, in obedience to orders, it first lifted its two front legs, then its two back ones, ten inches off the ground, and eventually floated across the room.

But there are greater marvels yet. Sir William Crookes has seen Mr. D. D. Home,† reputed nephew of the Earl of Home, sitting in the air; while on December 16th, 1868, Lord Crawford, the Earl of Dunraven and Captain Wynne saw Home, in London, float out of a window eighty-five feet above the ground, travel seven and a half feet to the next window, and there glide in feet foremost. *This is perhaps the greatest physical marvel known in spiritism*; but it proves nothing.‡ It shows a power unknown at present to us, but is no proof of necromancy, or in itself of evil or of good.

The other day, after I had read a paper on "Spiritism" at the Sesame Club, a friend of Mr. D. D. Home's got up and said he had seen him move furniture. Calling one day at his new house he found Home in the drawing room. "I don't like that piano up against the wall," he said; and then, addressing the grand, he continued: "Come out into the room!" To his amazement the piano moved slowly some six feet away from the wall. "How does that do?" he asked him; and when he shook his head, he said: "No, that's no good. Go back to the wall!" and again the piano returned of itself to the wall.

Professor Bottazzi, in his physiological laboratory at Naples, with the doors padlocked and sealed, has seen human limbs, etc., appear out of nothing.

Three clever sceptics investigated the phenomena at Naples—Mr. Baggally, a professional conjurer who in thirty-five years had never seen a physical phenomenon; Hon. E. Feilding,

* *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, Sir William Barrett.

† Home, feeling the spirits were mastering his whole being, gave up spiritism entirely and joined the Roman Catholic Church. The spirit that possessed him ridiculed this, and in one year Home resumed séances, and gave one before Napoleon III.

‡ In view of the criticisms in the *Transactions* of the S.P.R. one cannot regard this as a fact beyond question. Personally, I think, the weight of evidence seems in favour of it.

Secretary, S.P.R., who in ten years had not seen one; and Mr. H. Carrington, who in twelve years had exposed all the leading spiritist frauds in U.S.A. In December, 1908, these three were absolutely convinced of the genuineness of the physical phenomena they were shown.

Sir William Barrett* says: "Of the real objective existence of most of these supernormal phenomena, the evidence appears to me to be overwhelming."

Sir William Crookes, who after all was an exact and a cautious observer, regards as *proved certainties*:—

- (1) Heavy bodies are moved to order without contact.
- (2) Sounds produced without visible agency.
- (3) Levitation (floating) of articles and human beings.
- (4) Arbitrary alterations in weight (up to 48 lbs.).
- (5) Luminous appearances.
- (6) Appearances of human limbs.
- (7) Direct automatic writing.

Long afterwards, as President of the British Association in 1898, Sir William said (proclaiming his unchanged faith): "Thirty years ago I published an account of experiments tending to show that, outside our scientific knowledge, *there exists a force* (this is the second force behind spiritism) exercised by intelligences differing from the ordinary intelligence common to mortals." M. Maeterlinck truly says: "Raps and marvels of the movement of untouched tables, transportation of articles without contact, are as incontestible as polarization or crystallization, or else we must abandon all human certainty. This unknown power lifts furniture, moves the heaviest articles, produces flowers, etc., from nowhere, passes through solid matter—all on one condition—that all performances must be, without rhyme or reason, vain and puerile."†

The attempted explanation of this unknown power by Professor Thomas Jay Hudson by some power of the unconscious mind which he calls psycho-dynamics or tele-kinesis, that is the ability by force of will- and mind-power alone, without contact, to move physical objects at a distance, has to my mind been invented to meet the difficulty; and so far, in spite of the

* *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, p. 98.

† *Our Unknown Guest*, M. Maeterlinck.

attempts I have witnessed of Mr. W. T. Stead to prove he possessed it, cannot be taken seriously.*

The very concept does violence to our ideas of the difference of force in the spirit and in the material world. Sir William Barrett very properly says "he cannot conceive how intelligence can act on matter." "Compressed and condensed ether" has been brought into the service as an explanation; but so far the mystery is insoluble. All we can fall back upon is Maeterlinck's suggestion of freakish spirits (the old *dæmons*) who love to make fools of those who seek prematurely to know the secrets of the other world. Suggestions that these phenomena have any connection with the dead are untenable. The truth is that up to now we can only conjecture what this force behind spiritism is.†

3. The third force is also obscure but quite intelligible, and is not superhuman, but consists of those embryonic and occult powers which human beings mostly possess, but which as a medical man I must remark are exploited now at considerable risk. They are mainly connected with the hitherto unknown powers of the "unconscious mind," which I introduced about a quarter of a century ago to a learned London Society, only to be received with ridicule and scorn. Nowadays it is a commonplace, but our knowledge is as yet very partial and very scanty. I can only here indicate the (generally) unknown powers that it supplies in spiritism. They are telepathy or thought transference, giving the power of one unconscious mind to read another. These are mainly used unconsciously by the medium, who as a rule knows nothing of the philosophy of the force he employs; but it accounts for most of the supposed messages from the dead, and at the same time, if unconsciously used, absolves the medium from deliberate fraud.

Take the very recent case of a well-known public man who, concealing his identity, privately went to an unknown medium living far away to get in touch with his dead son. All was

* Mr. Stead believed he had this power, and tried to demonstrate it to me and many others at his office.

† I shall not take up the time of the Victoria Institute with Sir Conan Doyle's "Ectoplasm." It is still unknown to science, though said to be known to twenty-two unnamed professors of unnamed universities. I see, with regard to the recent movements of furniture near Wisbech, that Sir A. C. Doyle attributes it to freakish non-human agencies, set in action in some way by the unconscious power of the girl of 15.

genuine. By auto-hypnotism the medium threw himself into a semi-unconscious condition or trance, and then began to receive impressions from somewhere, he presumed from the spirit world; in reality they came from the brain of the man beside him, which he unconsciously read. Here was the intimate knowledge of the boy in every detail, the story of his early life, etc., all unknown save to the parent, told to his astonished ears as a message from another world. No wonder he looked on this as positive proof of the truth of necromancy. Other cases are similar.

I have no doubt that it is largely through the exploitation of these powers (now well known to us through the labours of the S.P.R.) that supposed communications with the dead take place, though every scientific attempt to do so fails. Sometimes, however, this power is combined with the first force, that of evil spirits, with an instance of which I must bring this very imperfect summary of a great subject to a close.

I condense the following authentic narrative of Mrs. Carolyn Shipman Whipple, a personal friend of, and fellow-student with, Professor William James, at Harvard University. She says: "While I was experimenting alone with a ouija board* and sitting for automatic writing (following the well-known but dangerous advice of Sir A. C. Doyle—'Every woman is an undeveloped medium, let her try for automatic writing')—I got replies from a friend who went down in the 'Titanic.' He made many statements about friends, and when I disproved every statement he had made I realized and told him he was an impostor and a liar. He replied 'I am just nobody—a wood sprite. I never had a soul.' One prominent writer here has the same experience as myself of clair-audience, possession and automatic writing. His control, however, was a woman. This fact indicates sex-magnetism and actual sexual possession, which is very dangerous and injurious. How do I know this 'control' who possesses me is not my subconscious self (the unconscious mind)?—Because everything about him is different from my personality. I hear his voice day and night as at the end of a long-distance telephone. Through him I have had visions of the most blasphemous images, amazing in their refined sensuality, and certainly not due to my imagination.

* An ingenious contrivance for spelling out answers to questions operated by spirits (or fraud, etc.).

“ He has read my whole life-history in my subconscious mind, with my inmost thoughts and motives. He has not once left my body since he began controlling me. In bed there is a distinct sense of levitation of the head, and my whole body seems moved as if on strings, etc. My own experience might have been tragic if I had not had a strong scientifically controlled brain and a religious training. I want to warn everyone. Writers who say a ouija board is a toy, have no knowledge of the evils to which it may open the door (possession, etc.). A prominent foreign psychologist wrote to me of teachers he knew under the constant control of veritable devils. Neither Conan Doyle nor any other psychic student has awakened to what we are facing in this problem. The public will not listen, and so will have to take the consequences.”*

To me the conclusion of the whole matter is that modern spiritism is the present survival of a hoary evil of all ages condemned unsparingly in the Bible, and having behind it at least three mysterious forces. The chief force is that of evil spirits, ever seeking to enter the body and possess the medium or enquirer. Professor Thomas J. Hudson, psychologist, of Washington, † says as to this: “ A mephitic moral atmosphere surrounds the average spiritist medium; otherwise the tendency to looseness of morals would be difficult to account for. I cannot forget that some of the leading mediums proclaimed the doctrine of free love in all its hideous deformity. To the young whose characters are not formed, and to those whose notions of morality are loose, the dangers of mediumship are appalling.” ‡ The second is a non-human force, which may or may not be allied with the first, and consists of a freakish power to do all sorts of useless actions impossible to man.

The third is the exploitation at a great risk, of human powers (at present in embryo, but possibly to be developed hereafter)

* The reasoning in the letter may be criticized, but its general value is great.

† *The Law of Psychic Phenomena*, by Thomas Jay Hudson.

‡ A member of our Council was told by Professor Macalister, of Cambridge, “ that he was convinced that there was something wrong in spiritism because he had noticed so much moral degeneration in those who took it up.”

Professor Gamgee told me his brother's experience (a great student and spiritist in America), “ that he was conscious of the deterioration of mind and spirit involved in its pursuit, which was of a most serious nature.”

enabling the medium to acquire information otherwise impossible, presumably from the other world, but in reality from this.

Fraud is hardly a force, but it permeates spiritism through and through from end to end.

DISCUSSION.

In proposing the vote of thanks to Dr. Schofield, Mr. KERNAHAN said : As the wish has been expressed that I should add a few words, and as Dr. Schofield has mentioned Stainton Moses (alas, to think that he was a Christian clergyman !), may I read you a few lines from Mr. Lillies' well-known work, *Modern Mystics and Modern Magic* ? Mr. Lillies was, as some of you know, an intimate friend of Stainton Moses, and writes as follows : " Over and over again Mr. Stainton Moses has told me that his mediumship passed through one very grave crisis, indeed. Evil spirits assailed him. His days were perturbation, and his nights were terror. He saw the spirits, he heard their voices. Every sense was assailed. The foulest stench spread through his bedroom . . . Often and often Mr. Stainton Moses thought that his ' guides ' were ' devils from hell. ' "

Yet with that terrible warning before him the unhappy man persisted in his cult of the unclean thing. One shudders to think of the powers to which he thus delivered himself over in this world, and perhaps in the next.

Now let me read you a few lines from a letter which I myself received from a lady, an ex-spiritist and an ex-medium :—

" I was a medium of a pronounced type, and from the first had some very strange manifestations, though nothing very uncommon. I carried my researches, however, beyond the point that satisfies most spiritists and mediums ; *and it was at the point of death* that I at last saw, very plainly and without a shadow of doubt, that I had been, and was, in the grip of Satan, or a force of Satan. It seemed to me that a state analogous to hell was opening up to my soul, and in horrible terror I prayed to Christ Jesus to save me from death— all this being, of course, unknown to nurses and attendants and those watching me. It not being possible to convey to any human being what then happened, I will merely say that Christ delivered me in answer to my prayer, and I recovered, and from that point my reconversion to Christianity began."

Thank God that it was so! But, Ladies and Gentlemen, spiritism is an octopus which, when once its obscene clutches are around a human soul, is slow to relax its hold. You have heard Dr. Schofield's powerful address. I venture to think that his hope is that there is not one man, one woman in this room to-day who will leave it without the determination to do, by God's help, what one can to combat and to counteract this foul thing, the direct and ultimate aim of which, as I read it, is to destroy humanity's belief in the Atonement.

Lieut.-Colonel G. MACKINLAY said: In large parts of the earth demon possession is well recognized by missionaries in Africa, India, and China; the heathen are much under the fear and influence of evil spirits. For instance, I knew a Mr. Price, a missionary of the C.M.S., a manly type of a Christian, a successful tiger shooter, who went to the Ghonds, aboriginal tribes in India, not believing that demon possession existed at all: but he had not been there many years before he not only recognized the fact from his own personal observation, but he himself exorcized a demon in the name of the Lord Jesus from at least one possessed person.

I had a letter from a missionary in Komatipoort, on the borders of the Transvaal, about two years ago, describing the horrid worship of the devil, and the prayers for possession by an evil spirit. The request was apparently granted, for in one instance a girl, in obedience to the promptings of an evil spirit, endeavoured to hang herself, and was only rescued just in time to save her life.

A few days ago, I had another letter from the same missionary, in which he joyfully records the very recent deliverance of some fifty persons from demon possession, and their giving up of charms in answer to prayer.

Mr. T. ATKINSON GILLESPIE said: Spiritism is absolutely condemned by Scripture. In Deut. xviii, 10, necromancy is prohibited, and under penalty of death in Lev. xx and xxvii; and the New Testament likewise clearly shows, under the name of sorcery, that it is entirely a work of the flesh (Gal. v, 20), and the sorcerer, whose characteristic is antichrist, is amongst those whose final judgment is pronounced in Rev. xxi, 8.

I would like to point out one instance in the Old Testament, viz. that of David, in connection with Bathsheba's child

(2 Sam. xii and xxiii), when he learned of the death: "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again?" And the question seems to establish a definite negative, for he then says: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." David knew nothing of intercourse with the dead. If I had no other Scripture than Luke xvi, I would be quite convinced that God condemns anything approaching spiritism; as our Lord there tells us, "a great gulf is fixed," and we see from the history of the rich man and Lazarus that no intercourse takes place between the living and the dead.

The spirit of the believer, on its departure, immediately goes to Christ (which is very far better), and the spirit of the unbeliever to Hades, there to await the resurrection of the body, and final doom.

Mr. W. E. LESLIE said: To discuss the forces behind "spiritism" demands a survey of the whole field of supernormal phenomena; and, for a Christian, it is important to enquire to what extent the Scriptures authenticate the various contemporary beliefs to which they refer.

It may be agreed that "possession" is so authenticated. Does it occur to-day? A single case established in the light of recent researches in multiple-personality and psycho-analysis would have great apologetic value.

Regarding trance personalities, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick's valuable treatise gives ground for regarding them as subliminal phases of the medium. In the absence of clear evidence to the contrary there is a strong presumption that all "automatisms" are to be similarly explained. Dr. Schofield appears to overlook the striking and frequently observed dissimilarity of the subliminal to the supraliminal.

Perhaps it will always be impossible to devise a test message that could not reach the medium by telepathy or clairvoyance and yet would be capable of verification, but it is unfortunate that the impressive evidence accumulated by the S.P.R. in recent years is ignored, while so much space is given to the failure of the Myers' envelope experiment.

Physical phenomena should be accepted with great reserve. Where known explanations fail, it is wise to suppose some extension

of the known power of mind over matter rather than to speculate as to the unknown powers of non-incarnate spirits.

Since "spiritism" is both evil and dangerous, there is the greater need to subject it to accurate and critical examination in the light of all the known facts.

Dr. F. E. MARSH repeated a very interesting extract from the writings of Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox concerning six messages unaccountably written on paper placed between two slates held by two persons.

In acknowledging vote of thanks, Dr. SCHOFIELD said he thanked the large and appreciative audience for their attention, and in reply to the remarks upon his paper stated how much he regretted his inability to hear them sufficiently to reply in detail. He did not, however, notice any severely adverse criticism, nor any doubt thrown upon the three forces behind spiritism.

Speaking now as a medical man, he would, with the utmost earnestness, warn all against any dabbling with the cult, for it was impossible to state where the real danger point began. Occult investigation needed the soundest and steadiest brains and the highest intelligence. He feared that the mass of spiritist audiences were composed of the very opposite, highly emotional and credulous and over-strung nervous temperaments, and he was quite sure he had Harley Street behind him in these solemn warnings.

There could be no doubt of the great danger to unstable brains, and it is quite obvious that the spread of the cult not only increases the danger of evil possession, but greatly increases the practice of the medical profession.

Mr. HENRY PROCTOR, F.R.S.L., M.R.A.S., writes: "There is no doubt that Christians who have any dealings with spiritism endanger their soul's salvation, for God has given abundant warning, both in the earliest books of the Old Testament and the later books of the New, that to dabble in spiritism is a deadly sin. The punishment pronounced against necromancers and sorcerers in the Old Testament is death, and in the New Testament, 'the Lake of Fire.' The apostle Paul expressly warns against the practice in 1 Tim. iv, 1-3, and Chrysostom in his 28th Homily says: 'This is a pretence and deceit of the devil; it is not the soul of the dead man that cries

out, but a demon that makes these answers so as to deceive the hearers.' The writings of spiritists themselves confirm this view. Swedenborg, for example, says : ' When spirits begin to speak to a man, he ought to beware that he believes nothing from them, for they say almost anything. For instance, if they were permitted to describe what heaven is, and how things are in the heavens, they would tell so many lies, and indeed with such solemn affirmations that a man would be astonished. Let men beware, therefore, how they believe them. For this reason the state of speaking with spirits on earth is most perilous. They induce so strong a persuasion that it is the Lord Himself who speaks and commands, that a man cannot but believe and obey ' (*Spiritual Diary*, N. 1622).

"The late William Stead, also writing on 'The Seamy Side of Spiritualism,' says : ' There is little difference of opinion among the better class of spiritualists themselves as to the moral and physical degradation which overtakes the professional medium. A system cannot be defended which wrecks the moral and physical health of its votaries. The phenomena of trance which are to be witnessed at the séance, when the medium professes to be taken possession of by any intelligence, are not such as to commend them to any prudent man or woman who has any respect for his individuality. When in the trance, as it is technically called, women who cannot bear the smell of tobacco will smoke a pipe as eagerly as an inveterate smoker, and teetotalers will drink whisky as eagerly as if they were habitual drunkards. To expose yourself to all the chances of such things may be justifiable, if out of the midst of all the temptations and suggestions to mental and moral disease you have a tolerable certainty of being able to gain any counterbalancing advantage. But so far as I can see the chances of ordinary men and women are too slender. The tree of knowledge of good and evil seems to bear so much more evil than good that Eve had better stay her hand.'

"Even the spirits are said to testify against other spirits, for 'Imperator,' the 'spirit guide' of Mr. Stainton Moses, says : 'The lowest spirits, those hovering near the earth, are those that most frequently manifest at circles, and simulate characters that do not belong to them.'

"Therefore, having both the testimony of God's Word, and the evidence of some who have tested it, against spiritism, we cannot doubt its lying character. Its chief promoter can be no other than

‘ the father of lies ’; for, as this method of communication has always been forbidden by God, it follows that it is only rebellious and therefore wicked spirits who do communicate in this manner.”

Mr. SYDNEY T. KLEIN wrote : “ I agree with Dr. Schofield that the name ‘ spiritism ’ is preferable to that of ‘ spiritualism,’ but I would suggest that his statement that the former denotes only that which is ‘ spurious and evil ’ is, in our present ignorance of the forces apparently behind its manifestations, rather too sweeping. From the many statements of scientists who have personally witnessed these forces, it is, to my mind, becoming as difficult to disbelieve as it is to believe in their existence, which is saying a good deal. It is well to keep an open mind for new discoveries, and we may be sure that when, by further patient investigation, we have learnt the nature of those forces, the truth will be made manifest.

“ I have learnt to look upon the whole world of appearances as being spiritual, all the forces of nature are our finite outward aspect of spiritual activity, and I am so far optimistic as to look upon even this strange movement of spiritism as part of the great Divine purpose, perhaps necessary at this materialistic stage of human mentality, to help us to think more clearly to our advantage. I have followed the movement pretty closely and have not yet seen any proof that would satisfy me that the dead can communicate with us through mediums. There is evidently much fraudulent pretention, but there are also many mediums who are, I think, quite incapable of *conscious* fraud. A medium when in trance has lost, to a great extent, control over her thoughts, and is therefore abnormally sensitive to suggestion ; she believes that she is controlled by or is actually the dead person with whom it is desired to communicate, and she concludes that the thoughts flowing through her mind are those of that person. There seem to me to be two probable explanations. The first is that she is unconsciously acting the part. Take an example of an actor on the stage, who throws himself *wholly* into his personification. Henry Irving, when he was asked how he felt when he acted Mephistopheles, said : ‘ I feel that I am the devil ’ ; and those who have visited any of our large asylums have seen similar delusions in those who have lost their self-control : a lady of high culture will, for instance, be seen sitting erect in her armchair ; she is Queen Elizabeth, and looks it, giving orders to her admirals and

ministers of state ; but we don't jump to the conclusion that Irving is controlled by the devil, or that the spirit of the dead queen is speaking through that lady. The other explanation is the one given by Dr. Schofield, namely, that the subconscious self of the medium is abnormally sensitive to the thoughts of those standing round, either in some form of thought reading or by what is called telepathy. The instance given by the writer in the case of Professor Myers is very pertinent, and I think strongly conclusive against the belief in spirit communication.

“ May I suggest that the writer is also rather jumping at a conclusion when stating that some forms of insanity are caused by being possessed by an evil spirit. Minds with weak control are ever open to auto-suggestion and, in place of the milder delusion of being good Queen Bess, they, unfortunately, sometimes think they are the devil or one of his imaginary subjects. Possession by evil spirits was believed in from ancient times and appears to have been generally accepted at the time of our Lord, but has been swept away by progress in science and medical diagnosis. Dr. Gore, in his new book *Belief in Christ*, says that much of the demonology in the Gospels may be due, he thinks, to misunderstanding on the part of the disciples.

“ In looking at the spiritual as the only reality, it seems to me impossible that there can be such entities as the devil or evil spirit. We have indeed inherited many violent passions and propensities from our animal progenitors, and these crop up with more or less virulence in those minds which have not learnt to control them by spiritual realization. Those propensities were not wrong in the purely animal nature, but take on the appearance of evil in the human being when they come in contact and therefore in competition with the good, beautiful, and true of the spiritual in man. Evelyn Underhill, in her charming book *Spiritual Life*, well says : ‘ It is true that every man has within him a tempting spirit, but its characters can better be studied in the Zoological Gardens than in the convolutions of a Theological Hell.’

“ I agree with the writer that there is great danger, especially to women, who are more sensitive and imaginative than men, when they willingly lose their self-control by attempting mediumship or by frequenting spiritistic séances ; it has certainly proved disastrous to many.”

Reply to Mr. Klein by Dr. SCHOFIELD : “ My verdict of ‘ spurious and evil ’ is dependent on my premiss that modern and ancient spiritism are the same. This disposes of the strange suggestion that spiritism is ‘ part of the great Divine purpose ’ !

“ Belief in ‘ possession ’ has not in any way been ‘ swept away ’ by science or medical diagnosis. On the contrary, the latter has established it in many cases.”