

and describing the shells alone, he figured the embryonic forms of thirty-eight species of *Unio*, and described the soft parts of more than two hundred. He also investigated physiological questions, such as the sensitiveness of these mollusks to sunlight and the differences due to sex. His 'Observations on the genus *Unio*' form thirteen quarto volumes magnificently illustrated.

Dr. Lea presided over the Academy of natural sciences for several terms, and was president of the American association for the advancement of science in 1860, beside filling various other positions of trust and honor. His scientific activity extended over a period of nearly sixty years. He received the degree of LL.D. from Harvard college in 1852. His faculties, and his interest in research, continued unabated up to the time of his death, and even to the very last such intercourse with him as his strength permitted was felt by all who approached him as a privilege. A full bibliography of Dr. Lea's writings, illustrated by an admirable etched portrait by Ferris, appeared about a year ago as Bulletin of the U. S. national museum, No. 23, and forms a volume of nearly three hundred pages.

#### ENGLISH WORKERS IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

As requested by you, I will give the information respecting the English society for psychical research which I have been able to gather during a recent residence abroad. Both the English and American societies have been happy in securing the active support of the most able and widely known scientists, and under their guidance psychic research is assuming a definiteness and importance which claims full recognition in the commonwealth of science. It may be interesting to your readers to know something of the *personnel* of the English society. It was organized with the following officers: president, Prof. Henry Sidgwick; vice-presidents, Arthur J. Balfour, M.P., Prof. W. F. Barrett, Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Carlisle, John R. Holland, M.P., Richard H. Hutton (editor of the *Spectator*), the Rev. W. Stainton Moses, the Hon. Roden Noël, Prof. Lord Rayleigh, Prof. Balfour Stewart, and Hensleigh Wedgwood.

The president, a nephew of Lord Salisbury, is widely known by his philosophical works. Both his time and his most liberal purse are given without stint to the work of the society. Mrs. Sidgwick is one of the most effective contributors to the work of the society, not only in her independent investigations, but also by her writings and her able addresses at the public meetings. She is holding her own position ably against the urgent

claims of supernaturalism on the part of the believers in mediumistic phenomena. Her brother, Lord Rayleigh, is well known to those who attended the meeting of the British association in 1884 at Montreal.

Prof. W. F. Barrett of Kings college, Dublin, first organized the movement, both in England and America, and is known personally, as well as by his scientific reputation, to many of your readers. Edmund Gurney, Esq., author of a large quarto volume on 'The power of sound,' has just completed two octavo volumes entitled 'Phantasms of the living,' the edition of which was burned last summer just as it was being put into the hands of the printer. The second printing is issued this month. Mr. Gurney possesses the highest abilities, and is in circumstances which enable him to devote his whole time to the work of the society. In close association with him is F. W. H. Myers, Esq., whose poems are household words with the younger generation of earnest thinkers. He is one of the able corps of government chief inspectors of public schools. A most valuable remainder of his time is devoted to the work of the society. Mr. Myers has communicated in the journals of the society, and in recent numbers<sup>1</sup> of the *Nineteenth century* and *Contemporary review*, some most brilliant and suggestive papers on psychology, deserving of the most careful attention of scientists. Prof. Balfour Stewart gives the weight of his counsel, and his presence in the chair at the public meetings held in the rooms of the Royal society of artists in water-colors, where are found many leaders in society, including some of the royal family, as well as scientific gentlemen.

Mr. Richard Hodgson of St. John's college, Cambridge, lately an able lecturer on the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, devotes his whole time to the work of the society. Mr. Hodgson went out to India in 1884 expressly to examine the claims of Madame Blavatski, Colonel Alcott of the Theosophical society, and of other impostors or dupes, to the possession of supernatural powers, acquired by the aid of a class of thaumaturgists in Persia called Mahatmas. Not a few earnest young men in the colleges of England and America, who had lost their faith in historical Christianity, had become fascinated by the claims of the Asiatic theosophists, especially as set forth in Mr. Sinnett's works, 'The occult world' and 'Esoteric Buddhism,' and were prepared to accept the occult philosophy, and with it the alleged miracles of theosophy. The results of Mr. Hodg-

<sup>1</sup> See *Nineteenth century*, May and July, 1884, and November, 1886; and *Contemporary review*, February and November, 1885.

son's investigations in India were issued by the society in a large octavo volume which has made the author's reputation as a patient, skilful, accurate observer and an able writer. The book is like the work of a first-class lawyer in the investigation of a criminal case. The effacement of every claim of Madame Blavatski to supernatural powers is complete and overwhelming. No such stupendous spiritual fraud has, in our generation, deluded so many educated persons. Had the society done nothing else, this work would have amply compensated for all its labor and outlay. Mr. Hodgson is now engaged, in connection with Professor Sidgwick and Mr. Myers, in some experiments on the subject of mind-transference, or the occasional communication of mental impressions independently of ordinary perceptions, under peculiar and rare nervous conditions. A series of experiments extending over several years seems to establish this as a scientific fact, but the idea is held tentatively until a much larger induction shall prove or disprove its reality. Malcolm Guthrie, Esq., of Liverpool, gave me two evenings with a subject in private life, who, while often wrong, gave such a preponderant number of successful answers as afforded an immense probability to the theory.

The members of the American society are so overworked in their own several specialties, that they are unable to give the close, continuous attention which the science requires. I wish that the services of some one who is as able and experienced an investigator as Mr. Hodgson, or Mr. Frank Podmore, could be secured for the secretaryship of the American society.

In regard to the results of the work of the society, it is too soon to expect any final verdict in a region of facts so elusive to the grasp, and so illusory in their character. The essential important result so far is, that, for the first time in the history of science, men of the highest reputation for successful investigation have collectively set themselves seriously, patiently, and without prejudgment of the results, to an investigation, by clear, cold, unemotional methods, of phenomena which in all the ages, and never more than now, have pressed themselves on the attention of the race. Long generations of impostors have taken advantage of these phenomena to intrude, by sacrilegious crimes, into the most holy of human susceptibilities, — the sacred love for departed friends. They have wickedly and falsely professed to speak authoritatively in the name of the dead, once dear to us in life, and to found on their imbecile, vagarious utterances a system of religion. It is hard to find terms sufficiently strong to characterize truly this wilful profanation of the innermost temple of our lives.

I do not prejudge the case, in the presence of so able a court as the Society for psychical investigation, by pronouncing that all spiritualistic phenomena are frauds; but I join with the more enlightened advocates in saying that evil spirits — human in my opinion, superhuman in theirs — are misleading multitudes to a fatal deterioration of character. No individuals could possibly have so completely extinguished the claims of the Blavatski fraud as could a society, authoritative in the character of its members, and permanent in its organization; and nothing but such an organization can deal with the ever-recurring claims, believed in, it is said, by millions of our countrymen, many of them of high social and even scientific reputation.

Whether, when all that is fraudulent has been eliminated, there will be any residuum of psychical phenomena on which impostors have traded, but which are real, is of course yet an open question. But it is to be remembered that smoke indicates fire, and counterfeits presuppose actual values somewhere. I do not hope that the inquiries will recover many who have fully yielded themselves to the guidance of paid mediums; but we may reasonably expect that the results of the investigations of a body of scientists of the first rank may in the future save tens of thousands of earnest men and women who are searching with intensity of purpose for what is true, before they have yielded themselves to the domination of mediums skilled in playing upon the emotions and credulity of their subjects. In this connection it may be well to say to the Siebert commission that we are waiting anxiously for the results of their investigations, and that we hope that they will be given to us in full detail, even though they may be negative in result.

The most practically important, possibly, of the investigations of the English society, is not yet in a state in which I can speak of it, but I confidently predict for it a world-wide and permanent position in the destruction of fraudulent error.

I commend 'The phantasms of the living,'<sup>1</sup> just issued. In it are given, for the judgment of the scientific public, the carefully sifted narratives of phenomena claimed to have been seen by reliable witnesses. It is unworthy of true science to ridicule or repudiate these until the evidence in their favor has been carefully and judiciously weighed. Candid scientists, whether believers or unbelievers in them, will welcome whatever authentically makes against, as well as for, their preconceptions.

R. P. S.

<sup>1</sup> *Phantasms of the living.* By EDMUND GURNEY, F.W. H. MYERS, and FRANK PODMORE. London and New York, *Trübner*, 1886. 8°.