

Fourth sessional address / by the President Mr. Serjeant Cox.

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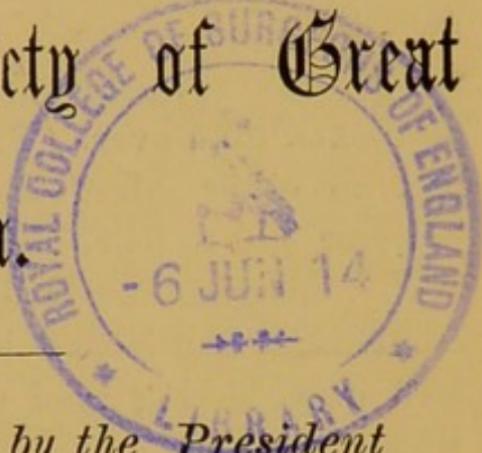
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Psychological Society of Great Britain.



Fourth Sessional Address by the President
MR. SERJEANT COX, Nov. 1, 1877.

THE FOURTH Session of the PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN commences amid circumstances that cannot fail to give a new interest and importance to the Society, to attract to its proceedings the attention of a larger public, and to enlist the sympathies of many by whom its objects have been hitherto unknown or misunderstood.

The questions "Soul" or "No Soul?" "Is Psychology a real or sham science?" "Are we associated for the investigation of a myth or of a very real existence?" have been of late actively agitated by both speech and pen. Thus has this great subject been brought under the notice of the educated public to an extent and in a manner never attempted before. In the *Nineteenth Century* the question of Soul or no Soul has been distinctly put forward for formal discussion and comment. Thinkers of all shades of opinion were invited to express their views. The pages of the periodical were fairly opened to all sides. Divines, statesmen, lawyers, scientists, economists, philosophers, accepted the invitation and took part in this Modern Symposium. For several months the question has thus been ably argued from the Theological, the Positivist,

the Materialist, the Physical, and the Metaphysical point of view, and all that the best thinkers of our time could say about it *argumentatively* has been said—and well said.

But with what result? All who followed this discussion from its commencement to its close must confess that it left the question at least as obscure as before and the reader more perplexed than ever. This effort to solve the problem has had no other effect than to shake the confidence of the believer and to leave the doubting more doubtful.

Psychologists cordially welcomed the proposal of this controversy and have followed it with eager interest. For my own part, having read every word of it, I have closed it with something more than disappointment—with the profound conviction that, if this be all the best minds among us can adduce to show the existence of Soul in Man and its survival after the death of the body, HUXLEY and TYNDALL are right, we are but automata and the Soul a superstition to be consigned to the limbo of vanities ; but, as a fact in nature, to be taken into account by science, or for any practical purpose, it must be received as are other poetical fancies. The entire of this memorable debate was *argumentative*. It was a series of inventions of reasons, more or less ingenious, why Soul *ought* to be and *may possibly* be, but without a solitary proof, or even an attempt to prove, that it actually *is*. The familiar appeals to man's hopes and aspirations—to his longing after immortality and the injustice that must be if there were no future to redress the wrongs of the present—were reproduced with eloquence and power, but no answer was attempted to the adverse facts adduced by the equally earnest advocates of Materialism. The *Science* of Psychology—the *Science* of the Soul—was scarcely recognised. As I have said, this battle of words left the doubting more doubtful, and must have shaken the faith of many who had a firm faith before, because the doubts had never before been so distinctly presented to them.

This *fiasco* has invested the Society with a new importance and its proceedings with a new interest, because the great work thus attempted and failed to be done by argument will be seen more clearly than ever to devolve upon ourselves, who prefer to adopt the more scientific process of proof by observation and experiment. The metaphysicians having so lamentably failed to sustain by argument alone the existence of a Soul in Man, the way is opened for the Psychologists to *prove* that existence, if they can, not argumentatively and by appeals to the inner consciousness, but by reference to facts and phenomena and by the production of objective evidence accumulating to positive proof. Psychology has not yet received its due recognition because the public mind has been content to accept the being of Soul upon dogmatic assertion, or metaphysical abstractions, and it was happy in its unreasoned faith. But the Materialists have rudely disturbed that faith. The shaken confidence can never now be restored by argument alone. Nothing but a defeat of the Materialists with their own weapons will suffice to replace faith by knowledge. Henceforth the desire will be to say, "I know." It will not be enough to say, "I trust." The battle of the Soul must be fought with the same instruments with which Science has maintained the existence of magnetism. The last and greatest endeavour to prove Soul by *argument* against the disproof of it by *fact*, as is the contention of the Scientists, having conspicuously failed, there remains for the student only the questions—*Are there such facts? Are there psychical phenomena which prove the existence of Soul by the same process as the existence of any other fact is proved, by the evidence of the senses for the phenomena and by inquiry into the sources of those phenomena as reasonably to be deduced from their nature and character.*

But the Society is still more indebted to Professor TYNDALL for having, in his recent brilliant address at Birmingham, so distinctly defined the province of Psychology and the con-

sequent work that devolves upon Psychologists. True, that the object and scheme of our Science has been persistently stated in our prospectuses, in our addresses, and in all our proceedings; but it has received only a partial public recognition. So powerfully is even the scientific mind prepossessed with the notion that Psychology is a purely metaphysical study, to be evolved from men's inner consciousness and pursued by logic alone, without reference to *facts*, that a proposal to pursue it, as all other sciences are pursued, by observation of phenomena and experimental investigation of facts, has been looked upon rather as a heresy to be put down than as a rational claim to be gravely considered.

Therefore it is that our gratitude is due to Professor TYNDALL for having directed public attention, by a statement intelligible to all, couched in language the most attractive and enlivened by illustrations the most apt, to the precise point in the mechanism of man at which Physiology ends and Psychology begins. We thank him, also, for the admirable clearness with which he defines the proper province of Psychology. True, he tells us that in his judgment and in that of the Scientists generally, Psychology is a Science without a subject—the baseless fabric of a vision—a poetical conception merely. But he does not disguise from himself nor from his audience the true difficulty in which his brilliant argument involves him. He does not deny that there may be something more in man than Physiology reveals. He says only that Science has found no proof of it; and he declares that, if Soul be, it must be proved, not by dogmatic assertion, not by conjecture, not by desire, not by authority, but by *facts*.

This is precisely what has been said by the Psychological Society, and it was to perform the task of collecting and investigating the *facts* and *Phenomena* of Mind and Soul that the Society was established. It has by three years anticipated the challenge now publicly made by Professor

TYNDALL, for we cordially concur in his contention that Soul is not a question of sentiment, desire, or dogma, but of *fact*, to be decided like other questions of fact. We take up the glove the eloquent PROFESSOR has thrown down. We accept his challenge. At this point we join issue with him. We have said, again and again, and we repeat now, that we propose to prove the existence of Soul *as a fact*, by evidence of precisely the same kind as that by which Professor TYNDALL proves the existence of magnetism and electricity. If such proof should be found to fail, then we will sorrowfully admit that Professor TYNDALL and the Scientists are right—that Soul is a myth—Psychology a sham science, and Man a machine merely.

But not to do him an injustice, I must cite Professor TYNDALL himself.

The argument is conducted with exceeding subtlety. He bases it upon the now admitted theory of the *Conservation of Energy*—which may be described as meaning, that this World is a ball composed of a certain quantity of matter incessantly moved by some energy (or force) existing within or applied from without. Of this mass of matter no particle is ever lost. It may and does change its forms continually, but there is not now an atom less than there was yesterday and will be tomorrow. So with the *energy*, or cause of motion, that permeates every part and particle. That, too, is not lost. It disappears only to reappear in another form, presenting itself in other modes of motion, insomuch that one form of motion can be converted into another form of motion by the skill of the Scientist, as many of us have seen in his own inimitable experiments in the lecture-room of the Royal Institution.

This principle of transferred instead of extinguished force shown in inorganic matter the Professor applies to organic structure and finds it there also. The muscles work—that is, they generate force. How? By consuming a portion of themselves. It is the force stored up in the

blood that is conveyed from the arm to the load it moves. The nerves convey the Will to the muscles and set them in motion. But what is the Will that thus moves the nerves? What is the "I" that is conscious of the command, and of the performance of that command? *That* is the question upon which the Physicists are at issue with the Psychologists. *That is the Province of Psychology.* Professor TYNDALL has made this clear to the whole world. He says :

"The warrant of science extends only to the statement that the terror, hope, sensation, and calculation of Lange's merchant are psychical phenomena produced by, or associated with, the molecular motions set up by the waves of light in a previously prepared brain. But the scientific view is not without its own difficulties. We here find ourselves face to face with a problem which is the theme, at the present moment, of profound and subtle controversy. What is the casual connection, if any, between the objective and subjective—between molecular motions and states of consciousness? My answer is, I know not, nor have I as yet met anybody who knows. It is no explanation to say that the objective and subjective effects are two sides of one and the same phenomenon. Why should the phenomenon have two sides? This is the very core of the difficulty. There are plenty of molecular motions which do not exhibit this two-sidedness. Does water think or feel when it runs into frost-ferns upon a window-pane? If not, why should the molecular motion of the brain be yoked to this mysterious companion—consciousness? We can present to our minds a coherent picture of the physical processes—the stirring of the brain, the thrilling of the nerves, the discharging of the muscles, and all the subsequent mechanical motions of the organism. But we can present no picture of the process whereby consciousness emerges, either as a necessary link or as an accidental by-product of this series of actions. Yet it certainly does emerge—molecular motion produces consciousness. The reverse process of the production of motion by consciousness is equally unpresentable to the mind. We are here, in fact, upon the boundary line of our intellectual powers, where the ordinary canons of science fail to extricate us from our difficulties. If we are true to these canons, we must deny to subjective phenomena all influence on physical processes. The latter must be regarded as complete in themselves. Physical science offers no justification for the notion that molecules can be moved by states of consciousness; and it furnishes just as little countenance to the conclusion that states of conscious-

ness can be generated by molecular motion. Frankly stated, we have here to deal with facts almost as difficult to be seized mentally as the idea of a soul. And if you are content to make your 'soul' a poetic rendering of a phenomenon which refuses the yoke of ordinary mechanical laws, I, for one, would not object to this exercise of ideality. Amid all our speculative uncertainty there is one practical point as clear as the day—namely, that the brightness and the usefulness of life, as well as its darkness and disaster, depend to a great extent upon our own use or abuse of this miraculous organ. We now stand face to face with the final problem. It is this. Are the brain, and the moral and intellectual processes known to be associated with the brain—and, as far as our experience goes, indissolubly associated—subject to the laws which we find paramount in physical nature? Is the will of man, in other words, free, or are it and nature equally 'bound fast in fate?'"

This, then, is the conclusion of our most famous, most eloquent, and most accomplished teacher of physical science—that *consciousness* is a condition of organisation; that the Conscious Self is only the aggregation of various states of Consciousness; that "You" and "I" are nothing more than masses of brain and nerves; that it is an unsolved and probably insoluble mystery how brain is conscious, although bone and muscle are not conscious, and by what process the sense of personal identity and the conviction of individuality are established. He sees nothing, feels nothing, perceives nothing, other than brain, therefore he knows nothing and not knowing he dares not affirm. With this negation he bids us be content. But if we cannot be content to be merely brain, he graciously bids us amuse ourselves with a poetical conception of Soul in addition to brain and make ourselves as happy as we may in this fool's paradise.

The argument is fairly stated, and boldly as fairly. Let us commend his moral courage, and, may I add, strive to emulate it by the like bravery.

PSYCHOLOGY joins issue with him in all of this. We say that brain and nerve are not "conscious." The nerves convey molecular motions; *they* do not feel them. The brain has no sense of injury to itself. Even if it were

self-conscious, a combination of consciousnesses will not make individuality, that is to say, will not give us *memory* nor account for our knowledge that the consciousness of to-day and twenty years ago was the same. How can that be the work of a structure, every particle of which has changed during those twenty years? But we do not rest our case upon a mere denial of the Scientist conclusions from some assumed functions of brain and nerve. We do emphatically dispute those inferences. We *do* deny that there are no proofs of an individual entity other than the brain. We boldly assert that there is *evidence*, abundant and cogent, that *something* exists, as a distinct and definite entity other than the brain, which constitutes the individual "I" and "You,"—call it Soul or by any other name. We assert that this individual entity exists as a real being capable to act, and often expressing itself in action upon the external world, beyond the range of the bodily structure and without its agency. We assert that this is demonstrated by a long series of phenomena, many of which are familiar to all of us, therefore uncontested by any. Some are of less frequent occurrence and, therefore, are subjected to some doubtings; while others again, being rare and of strange aspect, are met with incredulous denial—by those who have never seen them.

Upon this issue Psychology takes her stand as opposed to Materialism. I use this term Materialism with reluctance, only because I know of none that would convey the same meaning to my audience. But it is an inaccurate and misleading term. It means the recognition of matter as constituting the perceptible Universe, and in this sense we are all Materialists. It is used here to describe the doctrine of those who deny that there is any intelligent existence that is not molecular, and, when applied especially to the Mechanism of Man, that the structure is composed of anything more or other than the brain and the body that are visible to us. The employment of this term at once

raises the question, "What is matter?"—and thus, as all are not agreed upon that point, an opening is made for a fight under false colours on one side or on both.

Some use the term "Matter" in a very vague sense—as being whatever can be mentally conceived. Science demands a stricter definition. Whatever is *perceptible* to us is to us "matter"—I mean perceptible to any sense. As molecular structure is the only combination of atoms perceptible to us, so "matter" is whatever is made of molecules. All other combinations of atoms, being wholly imperceptible to us, are to us non-material. But not, therefore, do they the less exist, nor is their existence necessarily unknown to us. We can learn their existence, and something of their qualities, by observing their action upon the molecular matter that is perceptible to us.

The term SOUL is open to a difference of definition, but not to the same extent. There are infinite varieties of conception as to what Soul is or may be; but there is no difference as to *the thing* intended for discussion, or as to the precise issue that is raised. It is agreed on both sides that the question of Soul is—if there be in the Mechanism of Man an entity—a being—a structure—not formed of molecules and therefore not perceptible by any human sense, but formed of some other of the infinite atomic combinations with which creation is doubtless thronged—and which non-material because non-molecular *thing* is the MAN—is the SELF—is I—is YOU—and of which thing the molecular body is merely the material mechanism clothing that Soul—the necessary medium for its communication with the molecularly constructed world which is its present dwelling.

This is our contention. Let there be no mistake about it. *This* is the doctrine of Psychology. If it be not a true doctrine, Psychology is a false Science. Professor TYNDALL has raised the question fairly. He denies the existence of

Soul, and consequently of the Science that relates to it. But he is unfair in this—that in his splendid discourse he tells his audience the truth, but not the whole truth. He says that Soul is merely a poetical fancy—that there is *no* proof of its being—that he and his brother Scientists can discover nothing beyond nerves and brain and can find in these a sufficient cause for all they see of mental action. He does not go on to tell us what he must well know to be *the truth*—that, although he and his brother Physicists can find in their dissecting rooms and laboratories no tangible proof of the being of Soul, there are phenomena—some undisputed and indeed incontestable; some contested, but asserted by observers as competent as himself—*facts* that are wholly inconsistent with his theory of Materialism and impossible to be explained by it. As a truthful man, he should have told his audience that there is a numerous, an intelligent, an observant, a reflective, a calm judging body of men who have arrived at less degrading conclusions as to man's structure—conclusions not based, as he would represent, upon unproved dogma, or on our eager hopes, or high aspirations, but arrived at by precisely the same process as that which has conducted him to *his* discoveries—the process of observation and experiment—by the noting of facts and phenomena and tracing the existence and the characteristics of imperceptible non-molecular agents in their effects upon things that, being molecular, are perceptible to the human senses. The Professor may differ from the Psychologists in their conclusions, and he may dispute their facts; but it is neither fair nor generous to ignore them, and to treat his theory as if there were no other side to it than the melancholy one he presented to us—of automatism and annihilation.

In all former controversies upon this and kindred question the Scientists have protested, with reason and justice, against the practice of combating facts with *à priori* arguments and answering *evidence* by opinion. Hitherto they have

echoed the scornful exclamation of Galileo, "But it moves for all that." Opinions and arguments may be suppressed by logic or by persecution. But a fact is immortal. It is still a fact, though all the world refuses to recognise it. Its existence does not depend upon what this man or that man thinks or desires—no amount of denunciation, or protest, or ridicule; or neglect—no law or abuse of law—no prosecutions nor imprisonments—no Judge and no Jury—no prejudice—no prepossessions can put it down, or extinguish it, or make it other than it is—a FACT.

Yet, strange to say, the Scientists, who were the first to proclaim this great truth when *their facts* were denounced by dogmatism, are now the foremost to wield this weapon against other asserted facts that conflict, or appear to conflict, with their own dogmas. "We have come to the conclusion," they say in effect, "that Soul is a myth—a dream—that, as it cannot be, it is not. There is no place for it in the human organism that we can find—there is nothing in man's mechanism that our theories cannot explain. Theology teaches Soul and Immortality, but Theology is a visionary creed. These are but harmless dreams of poets and sentimentalists, and so they may pass with a contemptuous smile. The Psychologists, who hitherto have asserted Soul from their inner consciousness, and supported it by argument of possibility and probability alone, we can afford to treat as learned visionaries. But otherwise it is with those who dare now to assert that they can prove the existence of Soul by *facts* and phenomena, precisely as our own Sciences are proved and who challenge us to the examination. If they are right we are wrong. If they can produce a tithe of the evidence they boast—if they can prove but a fraction of their assertions, our doctrine of materialism is scattered to the winds. That would not much concern us; but we shall be discredited with it and the laugh of the world will be against us. How shall this catastrophe be averted? There is but one course for us. We must deny the facts. To

discredit the facts we must discredit the witnesses. We must give them bad names—fools of their senses, deluders, deluded. If we are reminded that many of them are men of science and accomplished observers, or men of business, or men trained to try and weigh evidence, in all respects our equals and in many respects our superiors, we must declare that they are suffering from “diluted insanity,” the victims of *prepossession*, the dupes of their senses, that they do not see with their eyes nor hear with their ears. If it be said that the outside world may possibly be inclined to listen to them, our course is clear. We must vilify the subject and make Psychology unpopular. We must stigmatise the seekers after Soul as rogues and vagabonds. We must proclaim the believers in Soul insane or idiots. If social persecution fails, then legal prosecution, relying on the prejudice and prepossession we have invoked. If we cannot put down that irrepressible pseudo-science Psychology, we can at least limit the number of Psychologists; we can deter others from becoming its disciples, and scare them from investigation of facts and phenomena that threaten the fabric of our doctrine of materialism and the permanency of our personal fame. True, there is some awkwardness in their challenge to us to see and experiment for ourselves. But let us be equal to the occasion. We have only to contend by argument *à priori* that, according to our notions of nature the facts *cannot* be, and the conclusion is clear; therefore they are *not* facts and therefore we need not give time and thought to their investigation. We deny Soul to be and therefore we should be simply discrediting ourselves by looking for it. If we saw, we would rather say our senses deceived us than confess that we had come to wrong conclusions upon insufficient premisses. Be assured it is easier to put down opposition by ‘Phoo, phoo,’ and ‘Fie, fie,’ than by evidence and discussion.”

During the past year Psychology has been publicly challenged by another philosophy—not new, though taking a

new name. It calls itself *Agnosticism*, but it is intimately allied with Materialism. It asserts that we have, and can have, no knowledge but that which the senses bring to us; and that even the knowledge so conveyed is dependant upon so many conditions that it must be accepted with hesitation. So far the Agnostics are right. But they proceed to deduce from this that whatever does not admit of sensual proof is to be rejected as unknowable as well as unknown. They, too, fall into the same fallacy as the Materialists. They forget that there are other means by which knowledge may be obtained. We may learn the existence and qualities of many things imperceptible to the senses by their action upon the matter the senses are formed to perceive, and our knowledge of these imperceptible forces is as real and practical as if we had direct intelligence of them through the senses. The Agnostics say that Psychology is merely a dream because the things with which it professes to concern itself—*Mind* and *Soul*—being imperceptible by the senses, are unknowable. The answer of Psychology to Agnosticism is that, although Mind and Soul cannot be seen, heard, felt or tasted, their existence is proved by their operation upon the organic molecular structures our senses are formed to perceive. The Agnostics say that they can recognise no natural forces other than those which direct and control inorganic matter. Psychology contends that there are forces and laws, directing and controlling organic structure, different from and often opposing the inorganic laws; that these can be discovered by observation of their action upon that structure, and, the intelligence thus obtained is knowledge as real as any that the senses bring to us of external molecular existence. We say, therefore, that Psychology is as real and soundly based a Science as any other, if only it be rightly pursued,—by observation and experiment instead of metaphysical argument and ingenious conjecture.

Such is the precise condition of the controversy between

Materialism and Psychology at the commencement of this 4th Session of the Society. But such misrepresentations of our scheme are no longer practicable. Our position is now distinctly defined for us by Professor TYNDALL himself. He has drawn the precise line at which Physical Science confesses that there is an end to her researches, and where Psychological Science proclaims with pride that she begins hers. Of course, if he is right, if there be nothing in the Mechanism of Man but the material molecular structure, we must confess that our Science is as baseless as the Scientists declare it. The writers in the *Nineteenth Century* have exhausted intellectual skill in an endeavour to prove, by *argument* alone, that Soul exists as part of the human structure—a veritable *being* other than the molecular body and separable from it. But it must be admitted that they have done nothing more than prove that Soul is an aspiration of humanity—that it *may be*—that it *ought to be*—but not that *it is*. To prove that *it is* has consequently become the proper business of this Society. We take our stand upon a clear and definite platform, with a distinct and definite duty. Our programme is contained in a few sentences. Are there *any facts* that *prove* the existence of soul, or point to its probable existence? If Soul cannot be proved *argumentatively*, can it be proved *experimentally*? It is our belief that *it can*. It is our business to prove it, or at least to search for proofs, and try their worth, and trace the conclusions to which those truths conduct.

With this great and glorious mission before us we ask all who approve its object—all who desire to know what they *are*—what they *will be*—to promote them by joining the Society.

In accordance with this grand purpose of our existence, our first object is the gathering together from all authentic sources reports of facts and phenomena that proceed, or appear to proceed, from the action of that something other than the material mechanism—that intelligent force—call

it *Mind* or *Soul*—call it mental impulse or psychic force—by which the material mechanism of the body is moved and directed. Already we have brought together a considerable number of very interesting and valuable reports of such phenomena, which we are about to print, not merely for reading and preservation, but in the hope that other observers may be induced to send them still more abundantly. It would be impossible to exaggerate their value, for they are the solid foundations of fact upon which alone a secure Science of Psychology can be built up and with which alone we can hope to combat successfully the dark and degrading creed of Materialism. Thus only can we hope to restore by Science the belief in Soul which Science has shattered. So far our work has proceeded successfully. Seeing how high and important to the welfare of the world is the object after which we strive, this Society, although numerous enough for economical work, has not yet enlisted the support which would enable it to carry on that great work as it deserves to be pursued. Our meetings show no lack of interest in it, for this room is usually crowded. Our papers are various and instructive and our discussions vigorous. In these respects we can compare advantageously with any other scientific society. But we desire to enlist more members that our usefulness may be extended much more. We should like to print our proceedings but cannot without the funds that numbers only can supply. We have one experimental committee. We should have three or four, occupied in different branches of the inquiry. But this would be attended with greater cost than we can afford. We ought to print *all* our papers. But those only can now be printed of which the writer pays the expenses. If our numbers were doubled, it is not too much to say that our usefulness would be quadrupled.

In pursuing our researches and experiments, we are not unconscious of the difficulties that attend them. We recognise to the full the influence of “prepossession” and

"dominant ideas" so truly asserted by Dr. CARPENTER. To none is their disturbing effect upon evidence better known than to myself. It is daily under my notice. Witnesses, the most honest in intent, the most truthful in design, see, or fail to see, according to prepossession. They saw with their prepossessed minds, not with their natural eyes. They looked not to see what they could find, but to find something they hoped to find, and found it. Or they desired not to see something, and they did not see it—though plain before their eyes. Peering through the fog of a dominant idea, they could see nothing at all, or nothing clearly. I repeat again and again the wise saying that cannot be too often repeated, "Men do not believe what is true, but what they wish to be true." The senses are the slaves of the mind, and the mind, (as we discover in dream when it is unaided by the senses), cannot tell us what is objective and what is subjective — if the impression is brought from without or created within. It is a humiliating truth that educated minds are more the victims of prepossession than the untaught mind, whose perceptions are often singularly acute and accurate. But of all minds the scientific mind is the most liable to be enslaved and blinded by prepossession and by "dominant ideas," because it is most preoccupied with preformed opinions and theories. There is not a more notable instance of this than Dr. CARPENTER himself, whose emphatic warnings to beware of them are doubtless the result of consciousness of his own foible. An apter illustration of this common human weakness there could not be. The characteristic feature of his mind is *prepossession*. His subjection to "dominant ideas" is apparent in all his works. It matters not what the subject, if once he has formed an opinion upon it, that opinion so *prepossesses* his whole mind that nothing adverse to it can ever after find admission there. It affects alike his senses and his judgment. He can see nothing that conflicts, or appears to

conflict, with his dominant idea. He has a microscopic eye for anything that seems to favour his prepossession. The effect of prepossession upon the senses is either to paralyze them, so that they cannot perceive anything that conflicts with that prepossession, or to distort every object presented, or to make the victim perceive a great deal more than is actually presented to him. Dr. CARPENTER is a striking but by no means a solitary instance of mental blindness and obliquity produced by *prepossession*—he is only one of the most conspicuous. They who are familiar with our Courts of Law are aware that of all witnesses the least trustworthy are scientific witnesses—experts as they are called. It is a vulgar error that attributes less of honesty to them than to other witnesses. Their untruthfulness is, in fact, the result of prepossession. They go into the witness box possessed with theories, and, unconsciously perhaps, they measure the facts by their theories. They cannot or will not recognise facts that tell against them. They transmute or magnify any fact that will support their preformed views. So it is with Dr. CARPENTER. Nobody will deny his honesty. But it is impossible to deny that he is the slave of *prepossession* and *dominant ideas*. Psychology, from its very nature, is peculiarly subject to these malign influences. Therefore Psychologists will do well to be warned by so eminent an example as that presented by Dr. CARPENTER, and in pursuing their own researches let them be ever on their guard against prepossessions and dominant ideas that will be as fatal to sound and impartial judgment with them as they have proved to be with him.

The work of the last Session extends over a very wide range of subjects. Mr. MASSEY favoured us with a paper on "Some Applications of the Theory of Unconscious Cerebration." To Professor PLUMPTRE we were indebted for two very interesting and instructive essays on "The Human Voice considered Psychologically." Mr. CHARLES BRAY contributed

a thoughtful paper on "Cerebral Psychology," and another on "Natural Law, Automatic Mind, and Unconscious Intelligence." One of our Honorary Members, Mr. JAMES CROLL, F.R.S., favoured us with perhaps the ablest papers over read in this room on "The Psychological Aspects of Molecular Motion," which all who did not hear should read. To Mr. GEORGE HARRIS we were indebted for a treatise on "Certain Psychological Peculiarities observable in the Hereditary Transmission of Endowments and Qualities." "A Record of Abnormal Personal Experiences," communicated through Mr. C. MASSEY, excited much discussion. A remarkable paper "On the Phenomena of Artificial Somnambulism and Electro-biology" was contributed by Mr. E. H. VALTER, and your PRESIDENT read two papers, one on "Some more Phenomena of Sleep and Dream" and the other on "The Psychology of Wit and Humour." This is a goodly list, and, thanks to the liberality of the writers, several of them have been printed and may be read with profit. We believe that the fruitful past is the promise of of an equally fertile future.

The subjects treated of during the last Session have paved the way for others of still greater moment which we hope to bring under discussion in the course of the present Session. To promote that which is the principal purpose of the Society—the communication of personal experiences of psychological facts and phenomena—the Council have determined to devote some meetings to discussion alone, without the introduction of written papers, and some very important subjects will thus be treated. Memory, the Will, Dream, Somnambulism, Insanity, Trance, and other abnormal conditions of the human mechanism, claim to be considered thus, where facts may be contributed by those who take part in the debate, and the theories of those who have thought about them may be tried and proved by the free interchange of opinion.

With our prospectus before the world, it is, perhaps

scarcely necessary to say that this Society has nothing to do with any *ism* of any kind. It belongs to no creed, nor sect, nor party. It is not realist, nor idealist, nor materialist, nor spiritualist, nor positivist, nor agnostic. It is only an earnest and honest seeker after the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Its object is to learn what *Man* is, what *Mind* is, what *Soul* is. It inquires if the be-all and the end-all be indeed here "upon this bank and shoal of time," if we must "leap the life to come," or may look to the hereafter as a grand certainty. I hope we have, all of us, the courage of our opinions, even as Professor TYNDALL has. As Psychologists, we investigate every fact and phenomenon, reported to us on good authority, that has an apparent connection with the *Mind* or *Soul* of Man—regardless alike of abuse, of ridicule and of sneers. But it must be well understood that our researches are thus limited. We do not concern ourselves at all with the *supernatural*. It is not within our province. We list to Nature only—to the *living* man—to the *actual* world. If we cannot find in these the facts and phenomena that teach us what Mind is, if Soul be, and what it is, then it is no part of our mission as a Society to seek further for them. Nor is there need to do so. Already we have found an ever-widening field for research in the world that is about us—*facts* full of interest—*phenomena* replete with instruction—vast in number and variety, observed by hundreds of those with whom we are dwelling and in daily intercourse, but which have remained unreported and unknown because there has been no centre to which they might be contributed and no machinery for their collection, preservation, and collation for the advancement of *Science*.

That need is now provided for. Ere long it will be seen how plentiful is the supply of information and what overwhelming evidence there is that Psychology is a true Science—based upon as broad and secure a foundation of fact as are any of the Physical Sciences.

Again I invite the active co-operation of all, who are not content with the position publicly assigned to Man by the Scientists, in the great and good work this Society is formed to prosecute ; of seeking if *Science* may not restore Man to the position from which Science has degraded him.