

find that there are no grounds for believing that we know any more about the phenomena than men of science did fifty years ago; and truth to say, the 'hypotheses' advanced then were much more philosophically phrased and discussed. I should also like to ask on what authority Sir William Crookes is labelled a 'spiritist.' He, with the majority of men of science who have been interested, dropped the investigations when convinced of the facts, because it was found that the phenomena were mainly repetitions of what had been already widely recorded in a large body of literature in various ages and countries, and that no new scientific facts could be deduced from recurrent sporadic phenomena, unconnected with existing scientific knowledge, and beyond the control of men of science.

More recently another type of 'researcher' has persisted in certain investigations without either the justification of a 'spiritist' belief or the sanction of scientific prevision. What is the motive? What can be the motive when, after fifty years of psychical research, the problem is exactly where it was in the Dark Ages, during which the Church, at least, discouraged human vivisection and also necromancy? These are strong words; but are investigators unaware of the fate of the majority of mediums, many of whom in the beginning are simple, honest, but sensitive human types? Do they not know how frequently degeneracy gradually ensues from the use of the mediumistic faculty? In the lives of mediums are many strange and terrible tales of immorality, sensuality, obsession, insanity, and crime. Those who have studied the history of this subject know, too, how often investigators have completely lost and never recovered their own reason once they have resigned their self-control to follow the dictates of an unknown 'guide.' Zöllner was not the first or the last to suffer this penalty.

It would be dangerous, therefore, to accept blindly Sir Oliver Lodge's counsel to "follow our leaders." He is a great man of science. We accept his authority in matters of physics, as we accept facts of astronomy, etc., from other men of science, and are glad to do so, as we know they have undergone the necessary training and discipline to become specialists in their subjects. They speak with the authority of knowledge and do not ask us to follow other unknown leaders of whose *bona fides* they or we know nothing.

On what authority, however, can any of the modern 'scientific investigators' of psychic phenomena ask us to accept their fancies about a *spiritual* world? Have they attained knowledge by self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and the experience of trials overcome? Have they shown any signs of the power reputed to be possessed by religious teachers and Wise Men, 'mediators,' of old, who could themselves control the energies of the lower 'psychic' world, cast out 'evil spirits' from the insane and obsessed unfortunates, and deliver clear and inspiring teaching from a serene, spiritual level so far above the commonplace 'communications' that issue via mediums as science is (or ought to be) above vanity?

The younger 'psychical researchers' would be better engaged in compiling a history of the lives of mediums and collecting statistics of the periodic epidemics of psychism, which latter should be plotted with waves of crime. An inquiry might be made also as to why the mediumistic practices encouraged amongst us to-day were forbidden by the Hindus and all Eastern religions before their decline. Neither the religion nor the science of our times understands what was evidently part of the knowledge of ancient scientific religion. Hence the danger.

W. W. L.

THERE cannot be much doubt that Sir Oliver Lodge (*NATURE*, October 30, 1926, p. 623) wishes to compare the attitude of an hypothetical race of "secluded, but intelligent aborigines," towards rumours of X-rays, telephones, radio telegraphy, and the existence of a hitherto unsuspected race of white men—with that of present-day opponents of what is called 'spiritualism.' This comparison, in my opinion, is unsound. In the first place, it would be possible for any one of the aborigines mentioned to insist that the believers in X-rays, and other things of a like nature, conduct him to the part of the world where these phenomena were alleged to be produced, in order that he might examine them. Further, upon arrival, he would be met by actual individuals of the race of white men, as to whose existence he had harboured doubt, and these people, of flesh and blood like himself, would proceed to show him the phenomena in actual operation, and, I take it, explain to him, in a perfectly rational and detailed manner, how they were brought about. Such a demonstration, which could be repeated, under ideal conditions for seeing and understanding, as many times as the aborigine wished, would, without question, convince him that the rumours he had heard in his own country were based upon fact, as it would any other reasonable person.

In the case of the disbeliever of the claims of modern spiritualists, no such rational and clear demonstration is vouchsafed. He is unable to converse in a normal manner with the 'intelligences' who, it is asserted, are responsible for the production of the 'occult' phenomena, and no spiritualist is able to give him the slightest real inkling as to how these phenomena are produced. In fact, to use Sir Oliver Lodge's words, he finds himself in the hands of "gropers in a tangled region off the obvious track," and cannot be blamed if his disbelief is merely increased by such an unsatisfactory experience.

Not only is the comparison under discussion unsound: it is also unfortunate. Aborigines, like certain people of the present day, though intelligent in some things, are nevertheless found to be willing believers in even the most preposterous of 'ghosts,' and would thus be most unlikely to doubt the statements (regarding X-rays and other similar phenomena) of those of their companions whose observations they had been in the habit of treating with respect.

J. REID MOIR.

Patent Law and Unemployment.

IN a leading article in *NATURE* of September 18, it is argued that the increase in the percentage of patents kept alive to the end of the fourteenth year since 1905 is due to official examination for novelty introduced in that year. I submit that this reasoning does not hold good. The rise preceded the year 1905, as the following figures will show:

Year.	Scaled.	Paid 14th year's Tax.	Percentage.
1897	14,465	442	3.0
1901	13,995	594	4.2
1902	15,242	596	3.9
1903	15,105	653	4.3
1904	16,124	804	4.9

Prior to the Act of 1883 the percentage was much higher—nearly 10 per cent. for 1876. Probably many factors unite in determining the variation of the percentage. The market value of patents depends upon their industrial value in a given period, and this value will depend upon their property of being used for the promotion or obstruction of home industries. Hitherto