Correspondence.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF MENTAL AND NERVOUS DISEASE.

Sir:—In the August issue of your valuable Journal your correspondent, Dr. E. P. Hurd, refers in a critical vein to some portions of a paper of mine published in the July number of the same Journal. The paper is an abstract of one on “Duplex Personality—Its Relation to Hypnotism and to Lucidity.” I will endeavor to reply to his criticisms in the order in which they are presented. He says: “I read the following astonishing statement anent subliminal possession of supra-normal perceptive powers.” “Alleged facts of this kind are not received by the strictly physiological school of psychologists.” “I write to inquire whether this is a ‘fact?’ Have we a school of psychologists who are not willing to receive facts?”

I reply first: There certainly is a school of psychologists who do not receive *alleged facts* of the kind which I adduce. The late Dr. Carpenter (*Mental Physiology*) and Wundt (*Psychology*) are examples of this school. As examples of the alleged facts which they do not receive I will simply adduce clairvoyance. No one, I think, will accuse either Carpenter or Wundt of receiving this alleged fact, and Dr. Hurd himself with all his interest in the subject does not hesitate to say that he would require facts of an uncommonly well attested kind before he “could believe in the possibility of visual perception gained where vision by the physical organ of sight is impossible.” Evidently he does not accept the *alleged* fact. I can hardly see, therefore, why my statement that “alleged facts of this kind are not received by the strictly physiological school of psychologists should be considered an ‘astonishing statement.’” What Dr. Hurd really means is that the psychologists are all right, but that the alleged facts are not—and it is my statement that these alleged facts “are just as well established as any other fact in nature,” that he really intends to characterize as “astonishing”: and on this point the fine scorn and *nez retroussée* are not surprising. They are simply amusing.

If my memory serves me several alleged facts in nature received similar treatment when they were first presented for consideration. There was a certain Galileo, a Newton, a Franklin, a Darwin, and several other well-known persons who suffered some personal inconvenience and abuse at the hands of the representatives of accredited science because they brought forward “alleged facts” which were not consistent with the theories of nature then held as orthodox. The people who thought it their duty to stand up for orthodox science, as they understood it, were not altogether to be blamed—they were made so and educated so;—they knew several things, but they could not see that the earth moved, that gravitation controlled the movements of the planets, that lightning and electricity were one and the same thing, or that new species were developed by minute changes fostered by new and favoring environments; there was no place in the texture of their thought for these new facts, and it took a generation or two in each case for men to get the texture of their thought changed and improved so that such ideas could be entertained. Then the fine scorn subsided, the *nez retroussée* relaxed and the “alleged facts” quietly took their places as accredited

science. The same thing is being repeated to-day regarding unusual psychic phenomena of which clairvoyance is an example.

This is hardly the place to enter into an elaborate proof of the fact of clairvoyance, but I may be permitted to present a brief outline of the argument.

The proof is three-fold :

First, there is the historical argument. Every nation or people which has a history or a literature has accounts of persons gifted with clairvoyant perception. Hebrew literature shows numerous examples ; it was even a part of the office of their priests and prophets. Pythagoras a century before the time of Socrates found this faculty made use of in Egypt, Assyria, Arabia and India. Greek and Latin literature whether in prose or verse, history or the drama abounds in examples. Homer, Xenophon, Virgil, Tacitus, and numerous later writers furnish hundreds of instances clearly described, while in our own era literature abounds in such examples.

Second, there is what may be called the anthropological argument. It shows that nearly every people, whether civilized or barbarous over the whole surface of the globe, however widely separated and in however widely differing circumstances of climate, comfort or culture, point with assurance to cases of clairvoyant vision amongst themselves, and did space permit most interesting examples could be adduced from each different locality. Not only does clairvoyance occur in all these widely separated countries and localities, but it occurs under similar mental conditions, and when artificially produced similar means are employed. Is it probable that the human mind is so constituted that it should work out identical frauds, and by the same methods and concerning this one strange and unusual subject in places so widely separated from one another and under such strangely varying conditions ?

As proof of so strange and unusual a phenomenon as clairvoyance, however, these arguments alone might be rejected as insufficient, if they were not corroborated by direct testimony and present observation ; but they surely prepare the way and add force to recent and direct proof—and such proof is not wanting. Not a few, but hundreds of cases have been thoroughly observed and carefully studied by competent, shrewd and trustworthy men. Amongst those who have reported cases I may mention Profs. Charles Richet and Pierre Janet, Drs. Azam, Dufay and Gilbert, of France, and Dr. Backman, of Sweden ; excellent cases have also been reported to the English Society for Psychical Research, and I may add that after many years of waiting I have myself had an excellent example under my own observation within the past year. These cases would fill a volume. In studying them all paid or professional clairvoyants are left entirely out of the count. In some cases the clairvoyant faculty may have been exercised only once in a life time, in others almost daily for years ; some while in the condition of natural somnambulism, others only when in the hypnotic state ; with others it has occurred in connection with crystal gazing and in the condition of abstraction or reverie.

Neither is this the place to discuss the fact nor the characteristics of the subliminal self ; nearly all intelligent observers, however, in this field of psychology know that it is *something* with all the characteristics of a well-marked personality, differing in many important particulars from the ordinary personality ; they also know that the "alleged fact" of clairvoyance appears in connection with this subliminal personality ; hence I consider it fair to infer that the faculty of clairvoyance, or of a superior or supra-normal perceptive faculty, by whatever name one may choose to call it, is an attribute of the subliminal self. As stated in the abstract which has been made the subject of criticism, I do not assume to dogmatize upon this point. Nevertheless I think those psychologists are wise who learn to look upon the subjects of clairvoyance and the

subliminal self from this standpoint, as well as from that of the strictly psychological school of psychologists with their "unconscious cerebration" and "expectant attention," or their purely cerebral explanation based upon "clogged cells," "well worn nerve paths," "inhibited tracts," etc.,—conditions which are altogether inferential and have never been observed either with or without mental phenomena.

Such is an outline of proof. Many intelligent men have followed it, have added personal observation to the other proofs, and are just as well convinced of the reality of clairvoyance as of "any other fact in nature." Others doubtless have examined the proofs according to their best light and still are unconvinced. I am not blaming such persons—they are acting in accordance with their idea of what true science is; doubtless they have done good work in some important department, but may it not be possible that there are other departments of science in which they are not equally intelligent and in which they are not equally well constituted for efficient work. My "allegations" were certainly not intended to "hit" these persons in any uncivil way, nevertheless I believe my "alleged facts" will stand.

R. OSGOOD MASON,
348 West 58th St., New York.