

## THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

widely attached to sectarian instruction is not only due to the compulsion of a reactionary state and its dependence on a dominant clericalism, but also to the weight of old traditions and "emotional cravings" of various kinds. One of the strongest of these is the devout reverence which is extended everywhere to sectarian tradition, to the "faith of our fathers." In thousands of stories and poems fidelity to it is extolled as a spiritual treasure and a sacred duty. Yet a little impartial study of the history of faith suffices to show the absurdity of the notion. The dominant evangelical faith of the second half of the nineteenth century is essentially different from that of the first half, and this again from that of the eighteenth century. The faith of the eighteenth century diverges considerably from the "faith of our fathers" of the seventeenth, and still more from that of the sixteenth, century. The Reformation, releasing enslaved reason from the tyranny of the popes, is naturally regarded by them as darkest heresy; but even the faith of the papacy itself had been completely transformed in the course of a century. And how different is the faith of the Christian from that of his heathen ancestors. Every man with some degree of independent thought frames a more or less personal religion for himself, which is always different from that of his fathers; it depends largely on the general condition of thought in his day. The further we go back in the history of civilization, the more clearly do we find this esteemed "faith of our fathers" to be an indefensible superstition which is undergoing continual transformation.

One of the most remarkable forms of superstition, which still takes a very active part in modern life, is *spiritism*. It is a surprising and a lamentable fact