

CATHOLICS AND SPIRITUALISM.

Baltimore Mirror.

There are not a few Catholics who have become interested in the so-called phenomena of Spiritualism, and who have attended, and perhaps make a practice of attending, the exhibitions given by mediums. Florence Marryat, the novelist, has published a book which is called "There is No Death," and in which she gives an account of her investigations of occult wonders. She is a Catholic, and claims to have had the permission of her confessor to look into these matters. In much that she relates we are convinced she was the victim of imposture; the agency which produced other "phenomena" was evidently that of the devil.

In the current issue of the *Month* there is an admirable exposition of the Catholic view of Spiritualism, written by a priest, and the article is very timely, as so many persons are very concerned themselves with the "manifestations" of table-rappers and materializing performers. This article says:

"Any one who believes in the central fact of Christianity must by the very fact of his belief be a dogmatist so far as regards the divinity of Jesus Christ. He must also, if he is consistent in his belief regard with the utmost abhorrence any system or any influence that tends to weaken the authority of the Son of God over the hearts of men. Any one, moreover, who believes in the inspiration of Holy Scripture must hold that any spiritual agency that opposes the doctrine of the Incarnation is of necessity not of God, but of the evil one."

"Every spirit that dissolveth Jesus" (i. e., separates between His divinity and humanity, denying either one or the other) "is not of God, and this is anti-Christ of whom you have heard that he cometh and he is now already in the world." Every Christian holds any fact, statement or phenomenon which traverses this central doctrine of Christianity to be of hell. In this respect he is bound to be intolerant. He cannot, as a lover of God's truth, show any consideration for it. A fact it cannot be, as a statement it is false, as a phenomenon it must be a mere imposture.

To sum up: Spiritualism, by which we mean the practice of invoking and holding converse with the spirits of the dead by writing and speaking, or any other means whatever, is unlawful and abominable in the sight of God, and this for the following reasons:

1. The spirits who appear to those on earth when invoked by them are not what they profess to be, nor the spirits of departed friends, but the ministers of Satan, who assume the character and even the appearance of the deceased, and manifest secrets known only to them, in order to deceive the living and bring them into their power. All commerce with them is therefore a direct dealing with Satan and the devils who serve him.

2. The true character of these spirits is shown by the doctrine taught by them. It is in direct opposition to Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church. It is subversive of all faith. It is more especially directed against the eternity of punishment and the incarnation of the Son of God. We know from Holy Scripture that the incarnation is the test by which the spirits are to be tried, and the denial of the eternal punishment is what we should naturally expect from the accursed spirits who are themselves condemned to hell forever, and who are anxious to drag down to hell as many as possible of the children of men.

3. The invariable consequence of intercourse with the spirits is a gradual and insensible loss of faith, and a disrelish and dislike for all intercourse with God, whether by Holy Communion, or any other of the sacraments of the Church. It either robs the soul of all peace, so that it is tormented by doubt and melancholy, or else it hardens the heart into a complete aversion from God and insensibility to His judgments or warnings. In some cases gross sins against purity also follow on the practice of spiritualism.

4. Spiritualism is a grave sin

against the natural law graven on the hearts of all men. It was one of the abominations for which the wicked nations of Palestine were expelled by Almighty God at the time of the Jewish conquest. Its prevalence is invariably accompanied by a low morality and an overweening pride.

5. Spiritualism is also strictly forbidden by Holy Scripture, and by the Catholic Church under pain of mortal sin. It is a direct and formal insult to Almighty God. Any Catholic who takes any part in it or is present at a spiritualistic seance (unless it be for some good reason and with due permission from some good authority), thereby exposes himself to most serious danger.

It is needless to add anything by way of exhortation to Catholics in order to induce them to keep aloof from these lying wonders and false miracles. But we hope that those outside the Church who may read these pages may recognize the peril that they are incurring by yielding to the deadly fascination of spiritualism.

In the issue of *Scribner's Magazine* for November appears an account of "Conversations and Opinions of Victor Hugo," from unpublished papers found at Guernsey. Hugo was a colossal genius in his way, but a skeptic. He had fantastic ideas of his own about God, but apparently did not believe in the divinity of Christ. It is difficult, however, to make out clearly from his writings what he did believe. He was brought up a Catholic, and, like Renan and others, displayed a hankering to the last for the religion of his youth, which he had lost.

Hugo seems to have been haunted by evil spirits toward the close of his life. He says: "Formerly I used to sleep like a tranquil man. Now I never lie down without a certain terror, and when I awake in the night I awake with a shudder. I hear rapping spirits in my room. Two months ago, before the White Lady had sketched her portraits, I did not have this terror; but now, I confess it, I experience an accursed horror."

The "White Lady" was a vision which had appeared in the neighborhood. How much of Hugo's nocturnal torment was due to an unsteady conscience? In the pride of intellect he may have tried to reason himself into the belief that Christianity is a dream and chimeras; but was his soul ever truly at peace? There is in his writings, and especially his novels, a dwelling on Catholic things—Bishops, priests, nuns, the Mass, ceremonies, doctrines—that shows how much they occupied his secret thoughts. Every born Catholic knows how the faith is ingrained from childhood; when it is implanted in the soul from the dawn of reason it never leaves. There are and have been thousands of apostate Catholics, who have written and spoken against the Church and reviled it; but deep down somewhere in every one of these souls something has remained—mysterious, ineradicable—to trouble and disturb. It is conscience. We do not believe that either Renan or Hugo were ever men of tranquil mind. Renan's friends confess that he had a horror of death, and now we have Hugo's own admission that he was haunted by evil spirits in the loneliness of his bed chamber at night.

That Pale Face.

For Nervous Prostration and Anæmia there is no medicine that will so promptly and infallibly restore vigor and strength as Scott's Emulsion.

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A MOTHER'S LOOK.

A Jesuit Missionary's Touching Story of his Conversion.

The following touching incident is related by a Jesuit Father: "I have known a student, whose desolate and wicked life had caused him to be cast into chains and to be locked up in the Ebrebrestein. His father was long since dead. His mother, therefore, had to bear alone the grief caused by her degenerate child. It is difficult to express how keenly it gnawed on the mother's heart; in the soul of the criminal, however, it was and remained as chained; not the least sign of repentance. No wonder that such a sorrow, which, by day and by night, afflicted the poor mother of the impenitent son, lay on her bed of death. Seeing the hour of dissolution approach, she sent a petition to the commander of the fortress to bring her child once more before her dying bed. He granted her request.

The next day the son appeared, escorted by armed soldiers, at the bed of his mother. But she, pale and consumed with grief, spoke no word—no, not a word, but long and piercingly she looked at him, and having penetrated him long and deeply, she turned her face to the wall and gave the signal to lead away the son. As he came, so he went—cold and sullen, like as if there was in him an incarnate obstinacy. But in the prison it came upon him. The look of his haggard, dying mother, thin and wasted, and with this look everything—reproach, punishment, abomination, entreaty, mother's anxiety, mother's love! Had she spoken to him a whole month long unceasingly, she could not have spoken so earnestly and thrilling to his heart as she did with her dumb look from her death-bed. What a storm of emotion agitated the soul of the wretched youth! As never before he was moved and broke forth in such vehement ejaculations that one would think his heart must break. We need not be astonished that, all at once, he struck his brow, burst into tears, and loudly exclaimed: "O God! to what have I come!" He stopped not with this cognition—no; he was converted sincerely; he even entered a monastery and became a Jesuit missionary; and now you see him—the young criminal—here standing before you in the pulpit! It was Father Hasselbach himself, the celebrated German Jesuit, who died in 1876.

The Twilight-Bell of the Angels.

Ave Maria.

A legend, impalpable as the ether in which it floats, owing no local habitation, claiming no author, is borne on the swift wings of memory. It says that in the blessed abode of the angels a great bell swings; and that at twilight mortals may hear its voice, if they put from mind and heart all discord and worldliness and all that comes between them and love to their Creator. And its voice is hushed with the setting sun; for it is always twilight somewhere. The angels who set it ringing are sad or glad as they gaze into mortal faces, and learn that the bell is unheard, or that it sends its gracious message to a human heart, purged of strife and hatred and filled with heavenly peace.

"So then, let us ponder a little: Let us look in our hearts and see If the twilight bell of the angels Could ring for us—yes and me."

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MODERN MIRACLES.

Interesting Talk by a Jesuit in England.

Father Clarke, S. J., during the course of a lecture on the subject of modern miracles, delivered in the boys' school of St. George's Cathedral, in Westminster Bridgeroad, explained the teaching of the Church in this connection, pointing out that there were none more sceptical about modern miracles than the Bishops of the Church, unless there existed most indisputable evidence to support them. Speaking of the miracles of Lourdes, he asked why should non-Catholics accept the far more marvelous miracles of the Old Testament and yet reject those of Lourdes? Why believe in the pool of Bethesda and reject the waters of Lourdes?

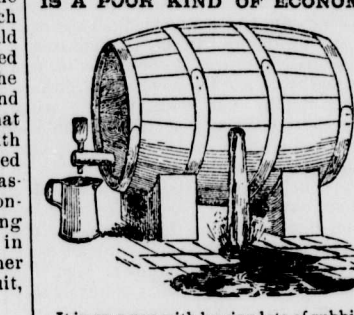
The reverend lecturer then gave a number of cases of cures effected at Lourdes, which had been verified by independent medical testimony. There was nothing left but a choice between denying the truth of a perfect evidence and denying the power of God. A number of dissolving views of Lourdes were thrown on a screen by the aid of a powerful oxy-hydrogen light. After the lecture questions were freely put by non-Catholics present and promptly replied to.

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