

The Facts and Fallacies of Modern Spiritism.

Is Sir Conan Doyle in Communication with the Spirits of the Dead?

Written by J. Godfrey Raupert, K.S.G., for Central Bureau Press Bulletin.

The following article is the first of a series of five short treatises on the subject of Spiritism by Sir J. Godfrey Raupert, K.S.G., of England, now sojourning in this country. The author is an acknowledged authority on this subject, having conducted researches in this particular field for a number of years; his authority is readily evidenced by his books, some of which are: "Modern Spiritism," "The Dangers of Spiritualism," "Spiritistic Phenomena and their Interpretation." Moreover, Mr. Raupert's work as a writer and lecturer has received the recognition of Rome. "With the sanction of the Holy See," says the British "Catholic Who's Who" (1918), "Mr. Raupert has given a series of lectures on the modern psychical and occult movement of thought at Seminaries and Catholic institutions in various parts of the world." And only a few months ago the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, conveyed the blessing and encouragement of the Holy Father to the author in a letter dated Oct. 31, 1918.

In this letter—which emphasizes the timely character of an educational campaign regarding the danger of Spiritism—the Papal Secretary says: "... Indeed, among the evils which at the present time are causing havoc to humanity, we may number those occult practices of Spiritism, which, if permitted to spread unchecked, threaten to inflict on countless persons the loss of body and soul.

"Therefore, His Holiness can but esteem worthy of praise and of real benefit to humanity the work that is accomplished either by word or by writing, in order to save men from the meshes of such intricate and perilous practice. ... His Holiness encourages your whole-hearted zeal."

The subject is particularly timely, since after practically every war a sort of religious revival takes place, the faithful seeking consolation and shelter in their faith, while those who have not true faith turn to various forms of superstition. This contention is being borne out by the prominence given to "communication with the dead" by such men as Sir A. Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge. It was in view of the emphasis laid on Spiritism at this after-war moment that the C.-Bureau requested Mr. Raupert to prepare these articles.

I.

I know of nothing in our modern literature which so forcibly and clearly reflects and illustrates the Zeitgeist as the recent statements and articles by Sir Conan Doyle.

The age in which we live is, as all thinking men know, increasingly departing from belief in the Supernatural as revealed in the Gospels and the traditions of Historical Christianity, and is relapsing into paganism, even though this paganism hides itself behind attractive and "scientific" and even academic terms. But the human heart cannot altogether exist without some contact with that unseen world which it knows to exist and with which it feels itself to be related. As a consequence a very distinct blank is created which causes the distressed mind to cast about for some kind of substitute which is calculated to fill this blank and to satisfy its cravings. Spiritism, in its modern scientific form is, beyond doubt, the most attractive and acceptable substitute for this lost Supernatural that could be presented. It seems to satisfy longings which all men experience more or less, and which in a sense constitute the very basis and conditions of any kind of religious life and belief. One can therefore fully understand how it comes to pass that statements such as those of Sir Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge are creating a world-wide attention and why the interest in the subject is such a keen and widespread one.

Now it is not proposed in these articles to raise the question as to the reality and objectivity of the phenomena themselves. They have been under the observation of experts—in many instances men of a pronouncedly sceptical turn of mind—for a long series of years and, for all practical purposes, the final verdict has been given. It is absolutely certain today that, under given conditions, abnormal phenomena occur and that these phenomena are due to some kind of intelligence independent of and apart from the experimenter. The man who doubts this today is simply ignorant of the facts of the case, and unacquainted with the evidence which exists. The basal claims of Spiritism therefore are fully admitted. The Catholic Church has never doubted them and indeed has maintained their reality when modern science was still wrapt in its materialistic slumbers and vehemently denied the existence of a spiritual world and spiritual beings. What we are concerned with is the interpretation of these phenomena and the nature, character, and aim of the spirit-beings who are the causes of their production. It is here, the Church contends, where modern science is as utterly astray as it has admittedly been astray in its hitherto interpretations of the observed phenomena of matter. It is setting up hypotheses which the facts of the case do not warrant, and it is erecting a system of religious thought upon contentions which are mere fallacies.

The first of these fallacies is that science has discovered something new and wonderful and of deep importance to human nature. No more ridiculous and wholly groundless claim has ever been made. The practice of necromancy—the invoking and consulting of what were believed to be the spirits of the dead is as old as the world. Traces of this practice can be found in the history of all races and nations and it may indeed be regarded as the distinguish characteristic of the pagan civilizations. The Jews no doubt had become familiar with this practice during their captivity and in their contact with the Babylonians and had introduced it amongst their own people. But the Jewish rulers and law-givers, so far from regarding these practices as of any solid value to the religious and social life of the people, had always emphatically condemned them and had enacted severe laws and penalties against them. A witch, whom we would today call a medium, was not allowed to live, and no true son of the people was permitted "to seek the truth from the dead." This fact is beyond doubt to be ascribed to the circumstance that, as Sir William Barrett, a confirmed spiritist, points out, all these practices "tended to obscure the divine idea, and to

weaken the supreme faith in and worship of the One Omnipotent Being, whom the nation was set apart to proclaim. Instead of the arm of the Lord beyond them, a motley crowd of pious, lying vain or gibbering spirits would seem to people the unseen; and weariness, perplexity, and finally despair would enervate and destroy the nation." Many experienced but disillusioned spiritists of all times and nations have emphatically confirmed the wisdom and reasonableness of this attitude of mind and have supported it by serious and incontrovertible facts.

Our own age furnishes us with an endless variety of striking incidents and experiences which impel the cautious student of the subject to an identical conclusion. All such incidents, unfortunately, are calmly brushed aside by our scientific spiritists, simply because they are seen to run counter to a belief which they are determined to embrace and from which they hope so much for the good of distracted mankind.

But they should at least command the serious attention of all conscientious and right-minded persons and lead them to pause and reflect ere they embark on practices and adopt beliefs, fascinating and plausible no doubt, but fraught nevertheless with perils to both body and soul.

It will be shown in these articles in what these perils mainly consist and what are the fallacies underlying Sir Conan Doyle's contention.

To be continued.

Fifteen Years Ago

From No. 3 of St. Peters Bote

Under date of March 1st 1904 we read that Father Drummond, S. J., had declined the invitation to deliver an address at the laying of the corner stone of the Carnegie Library in Winnipeg, Man. Well done! is the editorial comment.—The Rt. Rev. Archbishop of St. Boniface received a letter from the Superior-General of the Basilians in Galicia, to the effect that two Basilian Fathers of the Ruthenian Rite had started for Canada.—As regards schools in the Colony, the editor fears great difficulty will be experienced in obtaining suitable teachers for them. Sisters for all of them cannot be supplied.

In a correspondence from St. Peter (now Münster) under date of Feb. 14th we read that on Candlemas day candles were blessed at nine o'clock, followed by Holy Mass. On the same day Brother Rhatan, O. S. B., celebrated the silver jubilee of his religious Profession.—On the 3rd of Feb. Father Chrysostom, O. S. B., read Holy Mass at nine o'clock and then blessed the throats of the assembled faithful.—On the feast of St. Scholastica, the sister of the founder of our Order, a solemn High Mass was sung by Father Peter, O. S. B., assisted by P. Rudolph and P. Chrysostom, as deacon and subdeacon; Fr. Casimir acting as Master of ceremonies.—A furnace was recently installed in the building used as a monastery. No more frozen ink now!—On the 6th of Feb. three of the Monastery's men, together with Mr. Pohlreis and Mr. Brinkmeyer, returned from Rosthern with boards and other building material. Their trip had been delayed for a few days because they had to break trail through the newly fallen snow.—Mr. Wenzel-Lutter living on S. 34, T. 37, R. 22 is sick in bed with a sore shoulder. Heart trouble, is likewise, confining Mrs. Katherine Ecker to her bed. Both, however, are on the road to recovery.—Owing to the weather conditions and the state of the road, the Fathers did not start out on their Missions to-day (Feb. 14). P. Chrysostom sang High Mass in the Monastery Church and P. Peter read to the faithful assembled, our Rt. Rev. Bishop's Pastoral Letter.

—On the 23rd of Feb. the Rosthern correspondent writes that they had real cold weather the last five weeks. On the date of writing, however, they had a bright sunny day, with the thermometer showing zero at noon. The wind did not blow hard, but coming from the north-west, was rather sharp. Many farmers were in town. From Leofeld had come in yesterday Father Meinrad, O. S. B., Mr. Eull, Duerr, Merklings and Gasser; they started home again at noon to-day. The roads are not of the best, the snow is loose and easily drifts with

the wind.—Mr. A. J. Adamson, who had been confined to his bed, is almost entirely well again. He is a candidate as member for Parliament of the Humboldt district to which St. Peter's Colony belongs.—Wheat now brings from 60 to 69 cents.

ADDENDA:—The above mentioned Solemn High Mass was the first in St. Peter's church and, at the same time, the first in the Colony. The censor-bearer in above ceremonies was Brother Adolph Steiger, O.S.B. who is now a priest in the State of Iowa.—This is the first number of the paper dated from Winnipeg, Man., although the two previous numbers were also printed there. No. 3 of the St. Peters Bote should have come out on Feb. 25th, but owing to the poor mail service over the C. P. R. between Rosthern and Winnipeg, the copy for the paper was lost in transmission and never found again. So the editor had to get copy ready for No. 3 a second time, and the day of the paper's issue changed from Thursday to Tuesday. The papers were sent by express to Rosthern and mailed from there to the subscribers.

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