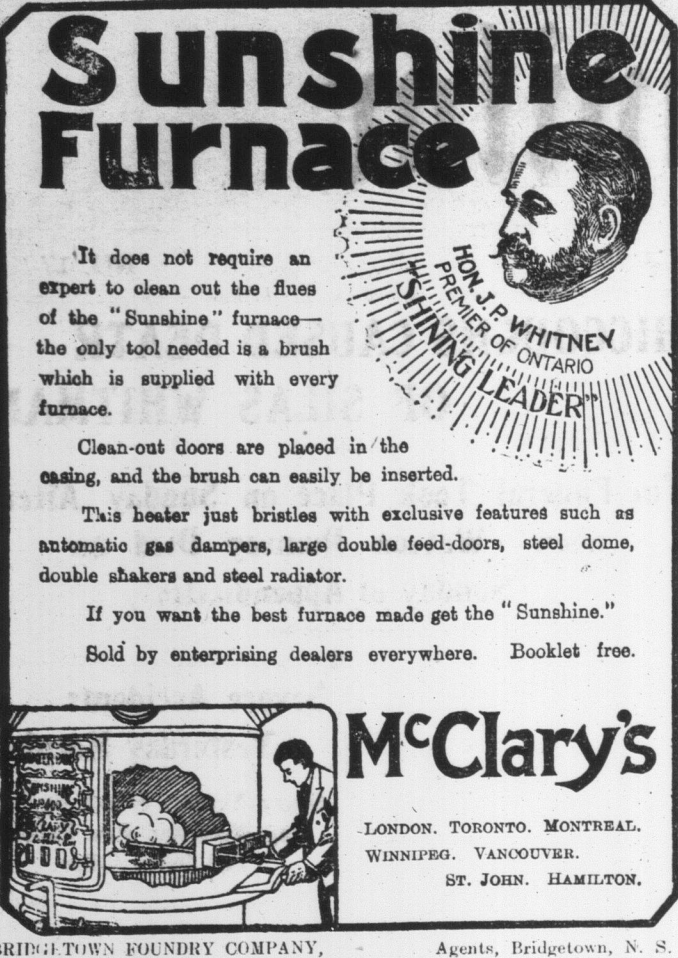


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How Ghost Stories Arise

How ghost stories arise. Nature has traps laid on all sides; but it is our own fault if we fall into them. By falling into them mankind has created for itself a world of things that have no existence except in the imagination.

If we keep this fact clearly before our minds, says Professor Garrett P. Servis, we shall have little difficulty in explaining many mysterious occurrences. There is nothing of which a human being ought to be so suspiciously and jealously regarded as of the operation of his own senses and of the play of his own imagination. It is because among the hundreds of millions of cells composing his brain certain habitual lines of communication have been established, and certain "acts of thought" have been laid out by the usage of years, that all deception is so insidious.

Whole classes of spectres and apparitions can be accounted for by this principle alone. Our thinking, unless we keep it under constant critical control, flows exactly like water, always following the worn channels and taking the road of easiest descent.

AN ASTONISHING PHENOMENON.

Standing early one morning on the summit of Mount Etna, nearly 11,000 feet above sea level, with an unobstructed view over the island of Sicily and the Mediterranean Sea, I was surprised by observing in the direction of the city of Catania, which lay on the coast, miles away, a number of kites floating at an immense elevation in the air.

Their great size as well as the altitude which they had attained astonished me. I do not mean that this appeared large to the eye; on the contrary, they were not much more than white specks against the sky, but their great distance indicated that their actual size must be extraordinary.

I could hardly believe the evidence of my senses, for I had never heard that the Sicilians were given to kite-flying, and to this was attached the improbability of anxiously amusing himself in that manner so early in the morning. Yet there they were, as plain as day, and I turned to my guide for an explanation, pointing out the kites to him.

"But he could see no kites; and upon my persisting, he at length broke out laughing.

"Look," he said, "the seal the seal!"

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

Instantly, as he spoke, the vision snapped into its true place; the thought in my brain that had been misleading me leaped like an electric spark from the customary line of connection, and following the unexpected route now offered to it, through the cells, revealed to my perception the white sails of a fleet of ships making their way across the sky-blue Mediterranean toward the port of Catania!

The sea and the sky were so like in color, and the lofty point of observation brought the horizon to an apparent elevation so great, that I had unconsciously confused one with the other, taking the sails for kites. And the illusion was so perfect that if it had not been cleared up I might afterwards have been guilty of the faculty of testifying that I had seen a company of huge kites soaring over Sicily on a level with the top of Mount Etna.

Many a ghost story rests upon evidence no less sincere, and no more trustworthy.

The above may be set down as an example of self-deception based upon the reflection of light, for it was mainly owing to the close resemblance in color between sea and sky that my brain wrongly interpreted what my eyes saw.

THOUSANDS OF DECEPTIONS.

But the atmosphere is the source of thousands of deceptions of this kind. The atmosphere is a vast fluid lens refracting the earth, and subject to innumerable local distortions, which, except for the fact that they do not remain fixed, might be likened to the flaws and spots of varying density that are the bane of many blocks of optical glass, which come into the hands of the telescope maker. The regions of varying density in the atmosphere, like those in the glass, bend the rays of light in the most unexpected directions, thus not only distorting objects seen through them, but causing things to appear where they are not, and rendering hidden things visible.

Now, the point to be specially noted in all such cases is the part that the mind of the observer himself plays in the deception. The mind interprets the evidence furnished by the senses in accordance with previous experience, and beyond the range of that experience the mental eye is as "blind as a bat," until an explanation not included in its previous experience is offered, when instantly it readjusts itself and the mystery vanishes. The greater and wider the knowledge possessed by the observer the fewer the mysteries that he encounters.

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Business Methods.

"May I ask if I am in the market for a bid for your affection?" asked the youth who did everything in a businesslike way.

"You must go to par before I can take any stock in your offer," answered the dutiful broker's daughter.

An Exciting Moment.

"Above all," said the throat specialist, "the lady must talk as little as possible."

"Doctor," eagerly asked Mrs. Gregmar's husband, "is there any hope of it becoming chronic?"—London Tit-Bits.

If we hope for what we are not likely to possess, we act and think in vain and make life a greater dream and shadow than it really is.—Addison.

PROPHECIES THAT CAME TRUE

SOME STRIKING HISTORICAL AND OTHER EXAMPLES

It will generally be found, with regard to prophecies and their real or imaginary fulfillment, that in times of great popular excitement and panic there is a universal tendency towards the utterance of predictions for the future, usually of a disastrous or threatening nature. Under the influence of great natural convulsions, of earthquake, famine, and pestilence, such sights and sounds as those which define news and heard in the time of the Great Plague are almost certain to be present. Excessive grief or fear, bodily weakness and mental stress—all have their share in bringing about the strange state of mind in which, together with a tremendous amount of the maddest raving, there have been uttered, from time to time, prophecies which have been most inexplicably verified by after-happenings.

It is not our intention to intrude in these notes upon the realm of super-natural prophecy, but only to deal briefly with such predictions as have been unaccountably made fact, often after the lapse of centuries, to discuss their claim to credibility, and, if possible, explain their origin.

A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE.

As Bacon observes, in his essay, "Of Prophecies," "men mark where they hit, and never mark when they miss; as they do, generally, also of dreams." Certainly when one considers the number of predictions which have been made since the beginning of time it would be something to wonder at if none of them had succeeded in coming true. Such is doubtless the view taken by a present-day dealer in annual prophecies, who publishes several editions of his forecasts, so as to have a certain chance of extracting a fulfillment from the lucking-out of the future. Also, a good many of the world's fulfilled prophecies are on a par with those of the same sort of "gentleman," "what now death will be long." "There will be cold winds during March," and so forth.

Again, a fair number of historic prophecies are not really very authentic, and bear signs of having been made after the event, while many more have been discovered by a system of interpretation, in the most vague and obscure of mystic jingles such as "wise folk" used to deal in.

OCULAR PUNS.

But, after all due explanations and

allowances have been made, there still remain many instances of fulfilled prophecy which are worth recording, such, for example, as the warning given to the Duke of Monmouth, "When the stars are in trine, King Monmouth, King Monmouth, be aware of the Rhine." Monmouth, it is said, derided the prophecy, saying that the Rhine had nothing to do with his invasion of England. But it was a deep ditch on Sedgemoor field, locally known as a "rhine," which, by stopping the advance of his army, brought about his defeat.

This kind of play upon words is a characteristic of many oracular utterances, from those of the Delphic Pythia downwards, and the curious part of the phenomenon is that the utterance of the enigmatic prediction seldom comes in the least degree able to explain their meaning, until the fulfillment of the prophecy throws sudden light on the darkness. One of the most remarkable of such riddles was that told by Henry IV. "That he should die at dawn." This he, indeed, did, but far from the Holy Land, in the Jerusalem Chamber, which is the chapter house of Westminster Abbey.

DEATH OF THE SUCCESSOR.

Most of these predictions have to do with the time and place of death, "archmal Wolsy, on account of a warning to 'beware of Kingston,' or years avoided the town of Wington-on-Thames. But when, in the day of his fall, Sir Edward Kingston ordered to take charge of him, he realized that the prophecy had at last come true, in a way other than he had imagined. Long before 1685, Monmouth had been told by an astrologer that, if he could outlive Saint Witwin's Day, he had nothing to fear. It was on that day (July 15th) that he was to be beheaded.

Sometimes wizards beseech discreet gentlemen, "what now death will be long." "There will be cold winds during March," and so forth.

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COLUMBA AND MOTOR CARS.

It is perhaps not generally known that Saint Columba is believed to

PRACTICAL ETHICS

PROFESSIONAL IDEALS; THE MINISTER.

What profession more noble, what office more sublime, what loftier responsibility, what higher dignity may be conferred upon any one than the service of ministering to the supreme needs of the human spirit; what greater honor than to be in name and in deed a physician of the soul?

Doctor of Divinity should be the title of one who employs human means for divine ends. The "man of God" is the agent or mediator between man and God; the Infinite power of Love and Righteousness, who should be himself moving, however slowly, in the direction toward which he aims to lead others. He must know watching, waiting and suffering, the cry of the heart-hungry, the needs of the soul-famished; the physical conditions, administering remedies to the needs of his patients.

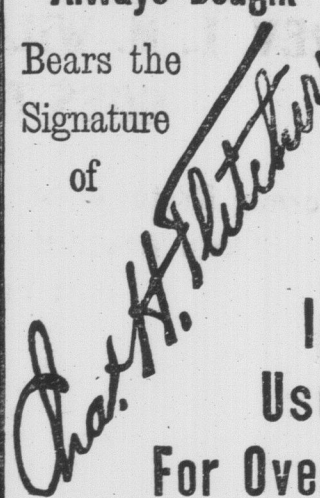
Again, a clergyman, it is said, is a man learning who performs sacred duties. He is therefore not to be regarded as a Godhead infallible, or final authority, but as a moral and spiritual leader who ever keeps his eye on the Absolute, the ideal of perfection which mankind may never hope to attain, yet toward which they must ever move. In order to be a true physician of the soul, a real minister, it is not necessary that one should have attained to all things, to have discovered a palliative for every ill, but that one should primarily accept his duties on principle and not on fees. That he should be unremittent in his search for the keys which unlock human hearts. One whose meditation or prayer is not a verbal glorification of God or the ecclesiastical enumeration of religious tenets, but the fervent and heartfelt yearning for communion with the Spirit of Supreme Wisdom for illumination of a soul consecrated to divine service.

Learning there should be, but more than this are universal sympathy, moral courage and spiritual insight, the triple essentials for a successful clergyman or religious leader. To achieve greatness in any line the psychological compound necessary is a strong heart, a strong intellect, a strong will. And hence, no matter to what magnificent heights of scholarship a man may attain, failing broad sym-

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