

PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

MGR. BENSON'S TOPIC BEFORE LEAGUE FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Robert Hugh Benson, of England who some years ago became a Catholic having renounced the Church of England of which his father, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, was the spiritual head, spoke at a meeting of the League for Political Education in the Hudson Theatre recently on psychic phenomena, but usually avoided giving his own views on the subject, contenting himself with the suggestion at the close that in the theory of the psychologist of the subconscious personality the churchman may divine the truth of his belief in the immortality of the soul.

At the outset the speaker explained that he has never seen a ghost, never had attended a spiritistic seance and never has written a book on the subject, but that from his earliest years he has been accustomed to an atmosphere which ministered to his fondness for delving into those experiences of which he purposed to speak. He always has been afraid of the dark, and as its study has progressed he has been led to believe that it has infinite possibilities of which the light gives little or no suggestion.

The modern psychologist, according to Mr. Benson, has seized upon the theory of the subconscious self as a sort of "carpet bag" into which are tossed these mystic phenomena. In its terms are explained many sets of phenomena which are difficult to correlate. It is Germany, and American psychologists have developed it to a large extent. Diagrammed the theory is that the mind is a two-story house with one room above another and a trapdoor between. In the upper room are the objective faculties, those that enable men to transact the ordinary business of life; in the lower room are the faculties of imagination, intuition, memory and all those things that have their expression in dreams, in works of art and mystical experiences.

In the room of the objective faculties lives the practical man; down below dwells the master of fancies and the Spanish serial architect. Most men are inclined to live more in one room than in the other and the true genius is he that has such a control of the trapdoor that he can open or close it at will, so that the things that have been planned down below can be made to take substantial form by the exercise of those faculties that keep to the upper chamber. Some there are who have used the subconscious faculties so often and so long that the trapdoor has become closed and these folk dwell in unpleasant places. In Mr. Benson's opinion the tendency of modern psychologists is to explain everything by this theory just as some agnostics at one time made the explanation of every phenomena that troubled anybody for any length of time.

Mr. Benson then referred to several well-known phenomena that are explained by this theory. For example, the experience of starting to tell a funny story and finding oneself at an absolute loss to recall the funny part of it. The objective memory tells how the story begins, but the subjective memory has seized upon the point of it and to get it through the trapdoor is like trying to extract a cork that has been pushed down into the bottle. You can touch it, but it bobs around and evades recovery. Even when the same phenomenon is observed in old men, who may not be able to say whether or not their wives are alive but can describe with exactness the kind of dress they wore in youth. The explanation is that the subconscious memory is an absolute memory. Everything is there, but the objective memory can only bring up only the unimportant things.

As for dreams, your consciousness is poised in the subconscious room and you wander there without the objective check of the reason or will. You are at the mercy of the faculties there. A person constantly roaming in this mysterious realm is either insane or asleep.

Explaining telepathy the speaker told a story of a party at a country house. Several persons remained in one room, decided upon something to be found or done by those in another room and then called these persons in. One young lady just married proved especially susceptible to these telepathic suggestions. After many trials it was agreed that she should be asked telepathically to take off one of her shoes. She came into the room, began to blush, got very nervous and completed the experiment by going to her husband and taking off one of his shoes.

On another occasion the monsignor hypnotized two boys and placed them in separate rooms. One boy he told to look into a glass of water and see the cow climbing a church steeple. The boy had no difficulty in seeing it. The other boy then was brought in and told to explain what he saw in the same glass of water. This young man reported that he saw a big thing going up a thin thing and afterward gave fuller explanation to the effect that it

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was a bear climbing a pole. These suggestions were made through the subconscious faculties of the two boys.

Mr. Benson said he did not purpose being humorous on the subject of ghosts. There are two kinds generally accepted. One kind appears at the moment of death and the other long afterward. He said he accepted the phenomena, but not the spiritualist's explanation. He met once in Rome a priest who related that as he arose one morning he saw a vision of his deceased father in his home in Canada. While he was pondering on the subject a cable message came announcing the father's death. At the time of the vision the father was not yet in his coffin, which shows that while the actual scene is not transmitted through the subconsciousness the general idea of it is. The explanation of the modern psychologist is that when the father was dying he was unconscious. His reason was not being used, but his subconscious faculties did not suffer the same atrophy. On the contrary at the moment of death they became more active. His subconscious ideas were naturally colored by the idea of approaching death and it is this coloring that conveyed to the mind of the son the idea of a coffin.

"I must suggest here," said the Monsignor, "that the same pieces of evidence have a different bearing to different people. The explanation of any phenomenon appeals differently to different persons because they have different fundamental ways of looking at things. As I myself believe in a spiritual world close to this, and that communications pass from one to the other, I hear of spirits coming back, and I believe it because I am convinced of the objective character of the spiritual world. If a man does not believe in this he is justified in rejecting what I believe. We are differently constituted. It is not a question of evidence, but a question of one's philosophy of life. So when we hear a ghost story we bring our first principles and our creed to bear on the facts as they are presented.

"We have the evidence of haunted houses. This is not so convincing as the evidence of appearances at death, and some psychologists deny the phenomenon altogether. I do not agree with them. There must be something back of an idea of such long standing." The speaker then gave an explanation of the appearance of the ghost of a man who was murdered by his brother many years ago in a house in England. At night, when the moon is beaming into the room, some have seen the ghost of the murdered man standing in the circle of light on the floor. The theory of this is that the subconscious self affects surrounding objects, just as some persons impress one marvelously, not for anything they do or say, but by their certain ideas or impressions. These impressions have been handed by some person whom we love or of whom we are afraid. In this case the two brothers were at a high emotional pitch. Their subconscious selves were giving off impressions and affecting the surrounding objects in the room. Now, when some person particularly susceptible to the impressions stored up in these pieces of furniture came into that room, when the circumstances are as they were at the time of the murder, these objects give expression to the impressions made upon them and the sympathetic subconsciousness of the susceptible person enables him to take up those impressions and to visualize the murdered man. With this explanation Mr. Benson does not agree, but he did not say what his own theory of it was.

With spiritualism as it is practised generally Mr. Benson has little sympathy. He thinks that it is surrounded by fraud, deception and hypocrisy, and that ninety-nine out of a hundred cases of alleged appearances of the departed are humbug. But of the one case in that one hundred he has a different idea. He said that psychologists describe a medium as a person with a much-developed subconscious self, but he wanted to know why if these mediums can bring some spirits back they cannot bring all, he referred to the fact that

while Cardinal Newman has been brought back, according to some mediums, and has given his blessing, it is not worthy that his blessing was given with an American accent. He said further that these alleged appearances are discounted by the fact that the usual medium is far from being a high type of man or woman.

He then related the experience of Sir William Crookes, who could not be regarded otherwise than highly, in having with him a daughter who had died and even being able to feel her as a semi-corporeal body. The Monsignor said he had theory of his own of a disincarnate personality that does return after death, but he declared this theory a dangerous thing to deal with and vouchsafed no further explanation. His conclusion was that the psychologist has discovered a part of the personality that does not share in mortal dissolution, that the faculties pertaining to this part show an unusual energy as death approaches and that in this part of us is a perfect memory by which we shall be judged and in which is found our character.—New York Sun.

CAUGHT UNAWARES

No man begins to drink with the intention of becoming a drunkard, says a writer in Everybody's Monthly. If indeed the order of experiences were reversed, and the penalty preceded the pleasure, where would there be a drunkard at all? If the delirium tremens went before the career of dissipation, instead of after it who would pay the price of delirium tremens for all that he drank to follow it? But every drunkard thinks to snatch the pleasure and escape the penalty. He intends to stop short before the danger point is reached, however, the faculty of self-judgment and self-measurement is seriously impaired. There is an island in the midst of the sloping flood of Niagara, just above the point where that vast wilderness of water tumbles over into the abyss. The boat that is caught in the current may still be saved by making for this island. The man who is caught in the current of intemperance calculates that he can still steer his boat to the island of abstinence or of strict sobriety. Fond indeed is his hand to the island, his brain is in a whirl; his spirit is confounded with the rush and thunder of the waters; his eyes see double. There are two islands, three islands, ten islands, there is no island at all—no other landing place between him now and the curling lip of the cataract. He swims over the lip. He is sucked down into the depths. He is dashed to pieces on the rocks, and the mangled form, all that is left of him, is washed ashore among the wandering eddies and spent spray a mile below the fall. The illustration is extreme, you say, or it is but a partial application. It is not one, I ask, that is verified in some one within the circle of acquaintances of every one of you? And was there, ask again, a single one of those in whom it has been verified, who would not have been one day as ready to laugh at the idea of its application to himself as you are ready to laugh to-day? Is human nature one thing in you, another thing in all the world besides? Is the awful law of averages by force of which annuity companies and insurance companies live and flourish, going to be set aside for the benefit of the present generation of transgressors?

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CONVERSION OF THREE ANGLICAN MINISTERS

Three more Anglican ministers in Australia recently entered the Church. Rev. Gordon Tidy, just prior to his conversion to the Catholic faith, was in charge of the Anglican Cathedral at Bathurst, Australia. Though his intention was known to his friends for months previous, his fulfillment was somewhat startling to the Anglican community of New South Wales. Mr. Tidy is now in Rome, studying for the priesthood.

Another Anglican clergyman, Rev. Wm. John Geer, M. A., who has been assistant curate at All Saints Church, Woolahara, for nearly three years has just been received into the Church by Father Clarke, O. F. M., at St. Joseph's Woolahara.

Rev. A. H. Murphy, acting rector of St. Barnabas' Anglican church, Bathurst South, has also submitted to the Church. It may be remembered that he created a stir in Anglican circles some months ago by defending the Rev. Thomas Moore against attacks made upon it by the Anglican Bishop and heads of other sects.

Saloons and Slaves The saloon business cannot exist without slaves, says Congressman Hobson. You may smile at that statement, but it is absolutely true. Is not the man who is addicted to the drink habit a slave? There can be no question about it. There are 1,000,000 such slaves in the United States. They are slaves of the liquor habit, carrying their earnings to the saloon-keepers every day in the year. It is quite natural, of course, that the slaveholder should not care to liberate these slaves.

DIED CLARKIN.—At Merrickville, Ont., on April 20, 1912, Mr. Bernard Clarkin. May his soul rest in peace! CRUICKSHANK.—On Thursday, May 9, 1912, at her residence, 717 Waterloo Street, London, Catherine Cruickshank, sister of Charles G. Cruickshank, aged sixty-six years. May her soul rest in peace! McLAUGHLIN.—At Tilbury, Ont., on April 12, 1912, Mrs. M. McLaughlin formerly a resident of Chatham, Ont., and a charter member of Branch No. 8, C. M. B. A. May his soul rest in peace!

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lecture on Titian, by Mrs. Courtney of Detroit. The academy has recently purchased a very excellent lantern, by the aid of which beautiful slides used by Mrs. Courtney in illustrating her lecture, were shown to best advantage. Mrs. Courtney's pleasing manner and choice language made the delightful matter which she presented, comprehensible to the little people, while at the same time it was a rare treat to the older members of her audience. Thus conducted, we followed Titian from the days of boyhood through every stage of his wonderfully successful career of nearly a century, leaving only that each picture shown might be the last.

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