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CAN we communicate with the dead? The question is an old one. Many people who do not believe in spiritism as such constantly believe that the spirits of departed friends hover near them, invisible, unheard, but a very present help in trouble. Millions of people who have no definite doctrines about communion with spirits believe that the souls of babies come direct from some spirit world to inhabit the little bodies given them by the mothers of mankind. If these things so commonly believed without doctrine by so many people are true, it is surely open to the average man or woman to follow the investigations of those who have made spiritism a scientific study. The various views for and against presented in this collection of extracts from magazine articles are intended to summarize conveniently the main outlines of the case.

There never was so much intense and widespread interest in the subject as there is to-day. The question is in debate all over England now and the population has been stirred to a division of opinion more marked than in any previous controversy affecting the religious beliefs of the community. The published opinions of so eminent a scientific authority as Sir Oliver Lodge have given an impetus to the cult of spiritualism and war bereavements affecting nearly every family in the land have given sorrowful cause to seek some form of contact, however evanescent, with the thousands of souls so suddenly wrenched away by the terrible violence of the battle-field. The book "Raymond," offered by Sir Oliver Lodge as an authentic message from his son who was killed in action, and which purports to describe the manner of Raymond Lodge's passing and the conditions which govern the state of being in the spirit's sphere, has created a furore of enthusiasm in favour of spiritualism. To the living voice of Sir Oliver Lodge is added the message of the late W. T. Stead, who has been "appearing" to mediums ever since a few hours following the Titanic tragedy. The Belgian mystic, Maeterlinck, has used the stage as a medium to promulgate his belief that the ordinary aspects of this life survive after death; and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, after two decades of research, claims to have collected an abundance of evidence to support his contention that Sir Oliver Lodge is right.

So rapid has been the extension of the cult that its opponents seem to have been taken by surprise. As yet only a few representatives of orthodox science and orthodox religion have made any serious attempt to combat the spread of the idea promulgated by the believers that those who have been disembodied by death are still conscious of earthly associations; that they stay near the places they were accustomed to on earth; and strive continually either to comfort or terrify those they knew before the great adventure happened to them. The sceptics seek to confound the believers either by declaring that the "evidence" is not permissible as it measures to no established standard of mundane knowledge or by condemning the whole thing as a reversion to mediaeval superstition.

There is nothing new in the methods employed by Sir Oliver Lodge to obtain the messages "from the other side." The communications published in the book "Raymond, or Life After Death," came, so he says, in a recent exposition of the subject, by way of mediums speaking in a trance state; by "automatic" writing and some portions were even transmitted from the spirit land by a clumsy code tapped out in table-tilting seances. It is for his use of such instruments as have been so often discredited by expert investigators that Sir Oliver Lodge is condemned by his critics. They avoid a discussion of the more intimate messages so secured, but take serious issue with him on this account because of his findings, from evidence so open to suspicion, as to the conditions of life after death.

As to the conditions which govern existence beyond the grave, Sir Oliver claims that these are



Various views on the question, "Can we communicate with the dead?" as recorded in current literature. Sidelights on the personality of a great actor.

clearly indicated by the many "communications" he has himself examined. Writing of these in the Bookman, he says: "The invariable assertion is that the conditions 'on the other side' are much more like conditions here than the communicators themselves had expected. They speak of flowers and animals, and books, and interest and beauty of all kinds. They assure us that they know very little more than we know, that their character and personality are practically unchanged, that they have not suddenly jumped into something supernal—nor infernal either—that they are themselves just as before, with tastes and aptitudes not dissimilar, but that they are subject to conditions happier and more conducive to progress, and freer from difficulty and gratuitous obstruction than when they were associated with matter.

They also say that things round them are quite solid and substantial, and that it is the old material things which now appear shadowy and evanescent; so that they are barely cognizant of happenings on earth save when definite duties are allotted to them to help those who are coming over, or when they make a spontaneous effort to get through to those they have loved and left behind. They are keenly susceptible to friendly feeling and affection, and they are less shy or chary of expressing their feelings than they were down here.

"They do not appear to be in another region of space, but are interlocked and closely associated with this order of existence; the links being ties of interest and affection, rather than mere space-relation or bodily proximity. Moreover, the same constructive ability as must in the long course of evolution have succeeded in producing their old visible organism, by arranging particles of matter, seems able to continue its task under the new conditions, and can construct another body or mode of manifestation out of such substance as is there available—the ether it may be hypothetically supposed to be—a body not unlike in appearance the material one which had been constructed here. And this constructive ability probably belongs not only to human and animal, but to all forms of organic life; so that the surroundings, in what some are beginning to think of as an ethereal world, need not be very different from those familiar to us in this realm of matter—that realm which is now so real and



all-absorbing to us, which excites our keenest admiration, and yet of the real mode of construction of which we know so little.

The case for those who oppose Sir Oliver Lodge is presented by Edward Clodd, author of "The Story of Creation," in an article published in the Strand Magazine. After citing a number of instances in which spirit "mediums," examples of automatic writings, spirit photographs and many more products of the paraphernalia used by Sir Oliver Lodge, were proved beyond doubt to be the result of clever trickery, he says:

"Yet the game goes on merrily; the 'new revelation' is accepted as supplemental to, or even superseding, the 'old.'

"To what manifold causes can we trace these delusions of men who, followed as authorities in expert matters, are, therefore, looked up to as authorities on everything else? 'If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?'

"Not on fact, but on sentiment; not on reason, but on emotion, do these delusions build their unstable foundations. Impelled by the wish to believe, the dupes attend seances by mediums, who, like the spirits they pretend to represent, 'love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' The biased attitude of the inquirers is wholly uncritical; the power of suggestion paralyzes them; they are prepared to see and hear and believe all that they are told, and the insatiate appetite for the marvellous is satisfied to repletion. All this is emphasized when the sorrowing and the bereaved seek consolation from those to whom they pay their fees to obtain it. Applicable to-day is the shrewd comment made by Reginald Scot three hundred and thirty years ago in his

"Discoverie of Witchcraft." Speaking of Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor, he says: 'He that looketh into it adviseth me shall see that Samuel was not raised from the dead, but that was an illusion or cousenage practised by the witch.'

"To the question, 'Is Sir Oliver Lodge right?' the emphatic answer is, No!"

IN the Fortnightly Review, the editor, W. L. Courtney, has addressed an open letter to an American friend setting forth some interesting sidelights on the personality of the late Sir Herbert Tree. He tells how this master craftsman of the English stage toiled to achieve those astounding effects of stage production with which Tree, taking up the tradition set down by the illustrious Irving, established for himself a reputation as supreme master of dramatic pageantry.

"There was never anything slipshod either in the method of stage representation or in the attention paid to what the diplomats call 'imponderabilia,'" says Mr. Courtney. "To see Tree make up for his part was a privilege I often enjoyed. There in his dressing-room you saw the artist at work, the creative artist who adds touch after touch to complete the picture, until suddenly the whole conception bursts into significant life. When Tree had thoroughly got inside the skin of a character—which often took some time—he seemed to partake of a new and alien life. A singular illustration was Zakkuri, in the Darling of the Gods, in which by degrees Tree gave us, I do not say a true, but an extraordinary vivid and convincing, portrait of a Japanese statesman in all his horrible subtlety and coarseness. Another example was Izard in Business is Business. Tree was never a smoker in the true sense of the word, he only smoked for the sake of companionship, taking a modest four-penny cigar, while he gave his guest Coronas. But in Izard he was perpetually smoking big and black-looking cigars. I asked him how he managed to stand it;