

MAY 14, 1908.

GOOD SPIRITS AND BAD.

820 West 52nd street, New York.

Dear Father—Having seen your reply to a correspondent who inquired about the position of the Church holds in regard to spiritism, I hope you will not consider it an impertinence for me to ask if there may not be some cases in which good spirits control mediums? Was not Jeanne d'Arc evidently controlled by good and truthful spirits, and if she, why not others?

I mention her particularly because I recently made one of a party at a seance where independent slate writing was a feature, and where on one of the slates was written a communication over the signature of Jeanne Dorency and a drawing of a cross, fleur-de-lis and old-fashioned sword. Though I am willing to admit it was possible the "Maid of Orleans" was impersonated by an evil spirit, yet I think it unlikely; but there is one thing I am positively certain about, and that the writing was produced by supernatural agency, as the medium was careful to submit the slates to a crucial examination before the light was turned down, and to never touch them while the mysterious performance was taking place; and another proof of the marvelous nature of the writing lies in the fact that it was made in the French, a language with which the medium is, I understand, not at all acquainted. Yours respectfully, R. O'R.

To the question, may there not be some cases in which good spirits control mediums? we answer that it is possible. The Second Council of Baltimore, chap. vii, No. 37, says: "It is evident from the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers that angels, both good and bad, can act in a wonderful manner in human affairs, and on the minds and hearts of men, and this more in that they are by nature more subtle than men."

But this bare possibility that a medium may be controlled by a good spirit does not justify the belief that in any given case a medium is in fact controlled by a good spirit, and much less by human spirits, good or bad, that have departed from this life.

To justify the belief that in a given case a medium is controlled by a good spirit you must be certain that you are not the victim of cunning deception; that the spirit operating is other than the mind of the medium. The condition that the room must be darkened throws a strong suspicion of fraud over the whole performance. Until a valid reason can be given for this condition of darkness it must be assumed by the careful investigator that it is a cloak to cover fraud. This assumption must be all the stronger by reason of the fact that so many marvelous performances of mediums have been proved to be frauds. As a rule mediums are not people whose characters are calculated to inspire confidence. As a class they inspire distrust.

The first difficulty, then, is to establish the fact that the medium is controlled by any spirit but her or his own mind.

Let us suppose that this difficulty is overcome, and that it is satisfactorily proved that a spirit—not the mind of the medium—is in control of the performances. The question arises, what kind of a spirit is it, good or bad? The difficulty of determining this question is still greater than that of proving the superhuman character of the manifestations.

How are you to determine? The word of the medium must, of course, be excluded, and so must that of the spirit until it is identified and its character known, for it cannot testify to its own good character until its character is otherwise known to be good. As long as it is unknown its testimony in its own behalf is of no use.

How, then, can its identity and character be established? By the truth of what it says? But this also is not sufficient, for a bad spirit, like a bad man, can tell the truth occasionally when it serves its purpose. The first thing a sharper does who intends to cheat you is to tell you something he knows you know to be true, in order to gain your confidence that he may all the more easily deceive you in the end. What is to prevent a bad spirit from doing the same? The Scriptures supply a case in point. It is found in Acts. xvi, 16, 17, 18: "It came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain girl having a pythonical spirit, met us, who brought to her masters much gain by divining. The same following Paul and us, cried out saying: 'These men are the servants of the most high God, who preach unto you the way of salvation.'"

Now, the words of this girl were unquestionably true, and if the truth of a statement be evidence of good spirit the one that spoke by the mouth of this girl was good. But St. Paul was not deceived by this kind of reasoning, for the text continues: "But Paul being grieved turned and said to the spirit: 'I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to go out of her.' And he went out at the same hour."

The masters or managers of this pythoness, or medium, seeing that by St. Paul's command their hope of gain was gone, had him and his companion arrested, beaten with rods and put in prison. The mere fact, then, that a spirit tells something that you know to be true is not conclusive evidence of good character. Something more is required before you can determine that a spirit writing in the dark on a slate, tipping tables and rapping about is a good spirit.

But it is the spirit of a dead friend who was dear to us in life and of whose honesty and intelligence we are certain? Is that not enough to justify confidence?

If! How are you to know it is the spirit of your dear dead friend? If dishonest men here on earth can personate others and swindle people, how much easier it is for those more subtle intelligences to deceive and mislead.

Spiritists boast that spirit manifestations prove the immortality of the soul. But they do not; because they cannot prove that the spirit writing on a slate or rapping on a table is the soul of a

dead man. Until they prove this the manifestations prove nothing in regard to the human soul.

But even if we were to grant, for argument's sake, that a spirit can be identified as the soul of a dead friend it would prove only that the soul of the dead friend exists still, but this would not prove it immortal. Existence up to a certain point in time does not prove that existence will continue beyond that point or endlessly. There are but two possible ways to prove the immortality of the thinking principle in man. It can be proved, first by the nature of the soul as a simple substance, and not having in it any elements of decomposition or change. The second proof is the word and promise of God, who knows and can do all things. Immortality cannot be proved by our own experience or that of those who have gone beyond. To prove anything by experience the experience must be completed—finished. But a life that is completed and finished is by that fact no longer endless or immortal. It is because the human soul will never cease to be that its immortality cannot be a matter of experience.

So that if we grant that a rapping spirit is identified as a human soul its experience since it passed out of this life is no proof of its immortality, and the boasts of the spiritists is without foundation.

Why, then, seek truth of any kind from a source so unreliable as a medium, or from a spirit whose purpose you cannot know and whose character you do not know? Do not those who do so realize the words of St. Paul, "In the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils." (I. Tim., iv., 1.)

As to the Maid of Orleans, we would not undertake to decide whether the "voices" were objective realities or not, or whether they were spirits, and if so whether they were those they represented themselves to be. But the glorious career of the Maid and the fulfillment of her prophecy in the saving of France and the crowning of the King is strong proof that she was an instrument of Divine Providence, as Judith was, and that the "voices" were messengers of God. La Pricelle did not give seances and her "voices" were not slate writers.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

THE LEGEND OF THE "SALVE REGINA."

Solomon, as the whole world knows, was one of the wisest men who ever lived. But not all the world knows how he gained that wisdom for which his name has come to be a synonym. When, on the death of his father, the great King David, Solomon ascended the throne of Israel, he went up to the altar before the tabernacle of the covenant of the Lord, and offered thereon a thousand victims as a sacrifice to the Lord of heaven and earth. Though this was but right, Almighty God, Whose love knoweth no bounds, Whose tender mercies have no limit, determined to reward His servant. And so, as we read in sacred Scripture "that night God appeared to him saying: 'Ask what thou wilt, that I should give thee.'"

And Solomon said to God: "Thou hast showed great kindness to my father David; and has made me king in his stead. Now, therefore, O Lord God, let Thy word be fulfilled which Thou hast promised to David my father; for Thou hast made me king over Thy great people, which is as innumerable as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may come in and go out before Thy people; for who can worthily judge this Thy people which is so great?"

And God said to Solomon: "Because this choice hath pleased thy heart, and thou hast not asked riches, and wealth, and glory, nor the lives of them that hate thee, nor many days of life, but hath asked wisdom and knowledge, to be able to judge My people, over which I have made thee king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to thee. I will give thee riches, and wealth, and glory, so that none of the kings before thee, nor after thee, shall be like thee."

Somewhat similar to this, as to choice and reward, is the story of Hermannus Contractus, as given in a German legend.

More than eight hundred years ago there lived in Suabia the good Count Welfard and his wife Hiltrude. God had blessed them with a little boy whom they called "Hermannus," which means "one of high station." And a fitting name it proved, for the child was destined to become a very great man.

He was a fine looking boy, of a high order of intelligence, and of a studious disposition. But what was far better was his simple and unaffected piety. There might be said of him, as was of Our Saviour, that he "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men."

The Count and his wife built great hopes on their child, and devoted much time and attention to his education. But as a dark cloud will sometimes shut out the sun's light, so was this young life dimmed for a time.

When the boy was about six years of age he was attacked by a species of rheumatism, and for years he was a martyr to that fell disease. His limbs became distorted and he suffered excruciating pains. And sad to say, the crippled limbs remained so disfigured that the boy received the name of "Contractus," the Latin word for "lame."

And not only was this graceful child thus transformed to a misshapen wreck, but his mind, too, was affected, and study, which had formerly been easy and pleasant for him, was now impos-

sible, for he could neither fix his thoughts upon his books nor remember anything of what he read.

But in spite of his troubles and sufferings he lost nothing of his piety or devotion. His veneration for our dear Lady was as strong as ever, and his confidence in her influence with God was unimpaired. In all his afflictions he prayed unceasingly to her, begging two favors of her—the one that he might recover the use of his limbs, and the other that his mind might grow clear, so that he could apply himself to study, resolving, in case his prayer was heard, to devote the best energies of body and mind to the greater honor of Almighty God and of His Blessed Mother.

One day when Hermannus had received Holy Communion, with, if possible, more than usual devotion, he again appealed to Our Lady to obtain for him by her intercession the two favors he so much wished for.

Suddenly, as he knelt absorbed in prayer, a great flood of light illumined the room, and looking up Hermannus saw a beautiful woman whom he at once recognized as the Blessed Virgin. Whence she had come or whither she afterwards vanished he could not say. Nor could he tell how she was clothed, whether in robes of gold, in snow white vesture, or in the colors of the setting sun. Neither could he describe her face except that it was of such transcendent beauty that the hand of mortal could not picture it.

Strange to say, Hermannus felt no fear at this sudden apparition; on the contrary, it filled him with a holy joy and peace.

Then Our Lady, regarding her devout client with a look of tender pity, thus addressed him:

"Fear not, Hermannus, my child, thy prayers are heard, and God will manifest in you His power, His love, and mercy, by relieving you of part of your infirmity in answer to your earnest supplication."

"You ask two things: strength of mind and health of body. Choose between them which you will, and my Son will grant what you desire."

Not for a moment did Hermannus hesitate.

"Dear Lady," he said, "give me strength of mind, that I may know God better in His works, and make Him loved and honored among men, for to Him and His glory shall I devote my powers."

And the Blessed Virgin answered: "Well and wisely have you chosen, my child, for knowledge and wisdom avail more than mere health and beauty. And since your choice has been for the love and honor of God, He is pleased to grant even more than you ask. He gives you not only vigor of mind, clearness of perception, ability to know and understand all human science, but beauty of face and form, a sound mind in a healthy body, that you may continue to serve Him as faithfully in the future as you have done in the past."

And saying this Our Lady disappeared, leaving no trace behind except a mellow light and a fragrance as of roses and violets; the scent of the roses to typify, probably, Our Lady's pure love of God, and of the violet her exceeding beauty and humility.

In a moment the twisted, deformed limbs of Hermannus became straight and sound and supple, and a cloud seemed to have lifted from his mind, and everything grew bright, as when the sun follows a dark and stormy night.

From that moment study became easy to Hermannus, and all that he studied he remembered. In the schools of Suabia there was no scholar to whom knowledge and science became so easy.

But his promise to devote the best abilities of mind and body to the service of God was not forgotten, and the better to do this Hermannus wished to enter a monastery and renounce the world.

Now, there was a celebrated cloister near Suabia, known as Reichenau, from the rich green meadow by which it was surrounded. It stood on an island in the Lake of Boden, near the city of Constanza, and far and near the good monks of Reichenau were renowned for their science, virtue and piety. They were Benedictines, belonging to the Order of the great St. Benedict, a man distinguished for his learning, whose spiritual children were numerous in those parts.

To these good monks Hermannus applied for permission to enter their convent and was gladly received. Clothed in the black habit of the Order, he soon became renowned, for none excelled him in learning and in wisdom. He was thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures, philosophy, history, astronomy, music, and other branches of knowledge. He read and spoke German, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew, the latter language used by Our Saviour while dwelling among men. Hermannus was also the author of many scientific books, some of which are even yet in use.

But he was no less pious and devout than he was learned, and he was specially noted for his devotion to Our Lady, through whose intercession he had obtained such marked favors from God. Among other ways of showing his veneration and gratitude to the Blessed Mother of God he composed the prayer:

"Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope, to thee do we cry, poor banished sons of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus."

This prayer had been set to music,

and there are few prayers or hymns so dear to the hearts of Catholics as the "Salve Regina" of Brother Hermannus. And the reason is very evident, for it contains everything that can be said in honor and praise of Our Lady or to invoke her intercession. That it is most excellent is further proved by the fact that the Church desires it to be repeated daily, and this is done through the whole world wherever there are Catholic priests and Catholic people.

There are a few words to the "Salve Regina," which read:

"O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!"

In the year 1146 or 1147 the holy St. Bernard, then an abbot in France, passed along the Rhine through Germany near Basel, teaching the people and preaching to them. When he neared the cathedral the faithful came out to meet him and lead him to their grand and beautiful church. When he reached it the good people sang Brother Hermannus' "Salve Regina," and so pleased was St. Bernard that when they were finished, inspired by Heaven, he continued with the words above given.

Such was the origin of this addition, now become part and parcel of the hymn to which it gives a fitting ending.

And so we see that it was the piety and devotion of two holy men to our blessed Mother which gave rise to this beautiful prayer, and let us hope, dear reader, that you will help to perpetuate it by repeating it every day, and be assured it will help you body and soul.

That it is a means towards a happy death we know from the testimony of Brother Bertold, a pupil of Brother Hermannus, who describes the peaceful end of the latter.

Why He Wondered.

A man who went away from home some time ago to attend a convention of church people was struck with the beauty of the little town in which the gathering was held. He had plenty of time, and while wandering about walked into the village cemetery. It was a beautiful place, and the delegate walked around among the graves. He saw a monument, one of the largest in the cemetery, and read with surprise the inscription on it: "A Lawyer and an Honest Man." The delegate scratched his head and looked at the monument again. He read the inscription over and over. Then he walked all around the monument and examined the grave closely. Another man in the cemetery approached and asked him:

"Have you found the grave of an old friend?"

"No," said the delegate; "but I was wondering how they came to bury those two fellows in one grave."—St. Joseph's News.

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Nervous and Weak and life seemed a burden. It happened that my husband bought a bottle of Hood's Sarsaparilla and I commenced to take it in small doses. In a short time it was evident that it was helping me. In two weeks I felt that I was being greatly benefited. About this time our youngest son, then 15 years of age, was taken down with typhoid fever. He passed on to his reward, and soon others of the family were taken ill, until I was the only one left to care for them. I continued taking Hood's Sarsaparilla, and to the surprise of myself and all the neighbors, I not only kept up and took care of the sick, but my

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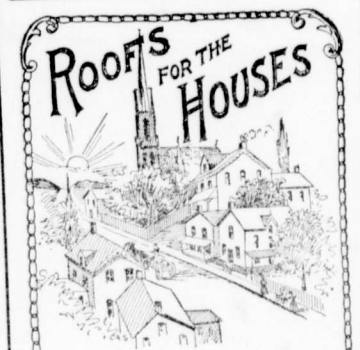
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