

Spiritualism.

BY THE REV. D. M. PANTON, B.A.,
Norwich.

SPIRITUALISTIC manifestations, among the most obstinately recurring phenomena of our time, have wrought a subtle and profound revolution in contemporary thought. The more thoughtful journalism accurately reflects the change from a mocking scepticism to sympathetic inquiry. "Though no verdict of 'proven,'" says the *Spectator* (December 4, 1909), "can yet be given, there is very considerable ground or believing that if investigations are pursued in the future as bravely and as patiently as in the past, proof may be achieved." The *Contemporary Review* goes farther: "There is reason to believe that through this investigation we are about to gain knowledge of extreme importance."¹ No critic of Spiritualism is better informed, or more acutely critical, than Mr. Podmore; yet it is Mr. Podmore who says: "It is certain that no critic has yet succeeded in demonstrating the inadequacy of the evidence upon which the Spiritualists rely."² Sir Oliver Lodge is one more worker in the front rank of science to discover that the phenomena are real. "The time for suspicion," he says, "is over with most of us investigators. It is a judgment which I hold, for my own part, to be fully justified: intelligent co-operation between other than embodied human minds and our own has become possible."³ Fresh evidence is ever accumulating. The Hon. Everard Fielding, who confesses to "a fairly complete education at the hands of fraudulent mediums, my unbroken experience of whom had led me into an attitude of entire scepticism," yet now acknowledges, after careful and exhaustive investigation, that "we have obtained evidence of unimpeachable validity."⁴ "It has been found," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "that

¹ *Contemporary Review*, January, 1910.

² "Modern Spiritualism," vol. i., p. xiii. 1902.

³ "Survival of Man," pp. 278, 333. 1909.

⁴ *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1909.

whenever a scientific man has thought proper to devote his mind to a thorough examination of occult or unaccepted or twilight phenomena, he has, I believe, historically without exception, become convinced of the occurrence of some of them, and has allowed the evidence to assure him of the reality of phenomena worthy of further investigation." The solid work in the past accomplished by such investigators as Professor de Morgan, Sir William Crookes, and Sir Alfred Russell Wallace—"the facts," Sir Alfred says, "beat me"—is supplemented by evidence ever freshly recurring. "The old foundations of Spiritualist belief," Mr. Podmore acknowledges, "have been undermined by recent additions to our knowledge. But just as the faith might have seemed to be tottering to its final fall, it has been buttressed anew out of its ruins, and now stands to the eye more firmly established than before."¹

But to a Christian judgment evidence less overwhelming than the mass of literature which the last half-century has produced would be sufficient. For we approach Spiritualism, not as Agnostics, but as Christians—that is, as those who hold in their hand an infallible revelation from, and concerning, the unseen; and a revelation, unlike an induction, requires no elaborate accumulation of experimental data, although it corresponds, with perfect exactitude, with all data that can be accumulated. *The Bible has always asserted the existence and intervening power of unseen intelligences.* To deny the actuality of witchcraft, says John Wesley, is to abandon the Bible. It is not the manifestations, therefore, but their origin, which challenges our alert inquiry and arouses our acutest interest. *Who* are they—in the words of Defoe—who *do* come? It must be obvious to all that the problem of identity is vital. It involves issues of quite incalculable importance. Now, we are at once confronted by the curious fact that, throughout the history of Spiritualism, the evidence for the return of the dead has proved the most acutely baffling problem of all. So inextricable is the mental confusion in the revelations forthcoming,

¹ "Modern Spiritualism," vol. ii., p. 357.

so conflicting and baffling the proofs of identity offered by the spirits, that Dr. Hodgson is driven to suppose that "the aptitude for communicating clearly [from the unseen] may be as rare as the gifts that make a great artist, or a great mathematician, or a great philosopher."¹ An hypothesis so amazing in its admission of the rarity of anything like adequate evidence on identity is not less violent than the facts need *if the spirits be the dead*. "Surely," says Mr. Andrew Lang, "I must know something about the characters and tastes of my own deceased friends. Either their tastes have altered, or the communications are not what they profess to be. I cannot be more serious than I am on this topic."² Investigators everywhere are baffled on identity. "Up to this day," says M. Camille Flammarion, "I have sought in vain for certain proof of personal identity through mediumistic communications."³ Even Mr. F. W. H. Myers, to whom the problem in life was a passion, returns unrecognizable. "His messages," says Mr. A. C. Benson, "were to me more like a superficial parody of the attributes of his mind." Crucial tests steadily fail. "Several persons," Mr. Podmore says, "have within the last few years left behind them sealed letters, containing some statement known only to themselves, in order that revelation of the contents through the medium might furnish proof of the writer's survival. In no case has the test been complied with. The limitations of the knowledge displayed, and the occasional disingenuousness, forbid us to accept these communications as authentic and unembarrassed messages from the dead."⁴ The pressure of these constantly recurrent discrepancies extorts a remarkable admission from the chief Spiritualistic organ. "It may be necessary," says *Light* (December 23, 1893), "to acknowledge that recent experiments may effect a weakening of one wing of the faith which has supported the average Spiritualist in his most cherished hope. The doctrine that only spirits of the dead manifest their

¹ Myers' "Human Personality," p. 335. Abridged edition, 1907.

² *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, April, 1900.

³ "Mysterious Psychic Forces," p. 440. 1907.

⁴ "Naturalization of the Supernatural," pp. 328, 329. 1908.

presence may have to be given up—indeed, is given up by many.”

But the problem cannot end negatively. Mr. Myers, who declares that “the only invaders of the organism who have yet made good their title have been human, and have been friendly,” also bravely asserts that “these phenomena of *possession* are the most amply attested in our whole repertory.”¹ But “possession” is a grave word, and possession of the organism by any but God must involve incalculable peril. Why is Mr. J. N. Maskelyne compelled to say: “I have good reason to know that professional mediums, both men and women, are immoral and blasphemous in the extreme”? “It is this apparent demoralization of the medium,” says Professor Barrett, “which renders the whole inquiry so perplexing and doubtful, from an ethical as well as from a scientific point of view. As a rule I have observed the steady downward course of mediums who sit regularly; moral obliquity is the first symptom, then they become wrecks.”² Mediums themselves acknowledge the peril. “Cheating mediums,” a healing medium wrote recently in the *Daily Telegraph*, “are often made so from necessity. Their spirit guides leave them for a time; they want means to carry on, and their reputation enables them to impose on their clients. *A medium is forced to go, sooner or later, through every experience of Hell.* Sorrow, grief, and despair have all to be gone through.” The intercourse implants the stamp of Hell. “I could not divest myself of the feeling,” says Dr. Furness of the medium Slade, “that his expression was that of a hunted animal or of a haunted man.”³ Mr. T. L. Harris, himself a lifelong Occultist, writes: “The tenor of private communications to me has been, not ‘How shall we get into communication with spirits?’ but, ‘How shall we find salvation from the direful tortures with which they assail us?’ So far as I am able to judge, the majority of such instances are traceable to the habit of attending séances.” Facts, *even apart from Revelation*, compel

¹ “Human Personality,” pp. 298, 310.

² Moses’ “Spiritualism at the Church Congress,” p. 17.

³ Report of the Seybert Commission, p. 14. 1895.

us to the conclusion that Spiritualism is attempted necromancy, and actual sorcery. "A peep into the cavern of the witch," in the words of the *British Quarterly Review*, October, 1875, "or the circle of the necromancer, as they existed between two and three thousand years ago, reveals a scene indistinguishable, in its essential features, from the darkened chamber of the medium of to-day."

The consequences that flow from these facts are tremendous. Behind and beyond all the momentous movements of a momentous age stands this ominous shadow of Spiritualism. It is the silent inrush and unparalleled aggression of an unseen world. On the incidental importance of Spiritualism as an ocular and indisputable demonstration of Biblical teaching concerning wizardry and the supernatural; on its decisive overthrow of all materialism, and the light it casts upon methods of inspiration, both Satanic and Divine; on the critical revelation it affords (1 Tim. iv. 1-3) of the approaching consummation of our Age—on these, and other equally momentous consequences of the demonstrated truth of Spiritualism, we do not now dwell. It is enough to emphasize, in conclusion, the motive that underlies the spiritual onset. "Ever since I became intimately acquainted with the subject," says Mr. Stainton Moses, "I have been deeply impressed with some serious questions concerning it. One is, that there is an organized plan on the part of spirits who govern these manifestations to act on us, and on the religious thought of the age."¹ The religious teaching given has a curious and significant general identity. "There is a general consistency"—in the words of Sir Oliver Lodge—"in the doctrines that have thus been taught through various sensitives."² "Almost all these automatic utterances"—in the words of Mr. Myers—"appear to me analogous to Swedenborg, the father of all modern Occultism."³ The intelligences, organized and acting together in some measure, betray a specific design. "The central dogmas of the Christian Faith,"

¹ "Spirit Identity," p. 30.

² "Survival of Man," p. 339.

³ Proceedings of Society for Psychical Research, vol. xii., p. 612.

says Mr. Moses, once an Anglican clergyman, "seemed especially attacked : and it was this that startled me."¹ It might well startle him. "It has been one of our chiefest difficulties," the spirits informed him, with whom he consorted daily for thirty years, "to uproot false dogmas from your mind : *so long as you reply to our arguments with a text, we cannot teach you.*"² Says a medium of long standing : "I learn from spirits that a vast spiritual movement is working out a great religious scheme, having for its basis universal Deism and brotherhood." The conclusion is inevitable. Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but, in a manner now appallingly real, against the world-rulers of this darkness. "It may be," as Canon Wilberforce assured the Church Congress in 1881, "that the manifestations are part of the dark clouds which have to appear and be dispersed before the promised advent of the Lord with His saints." The sunset of the world is the sunrise of the Christ of God.



The Father of Topography.

BY MISS M. ADELINÉ COOKE.

AMONG the vast store of modern guide-books and their compilers, we run a risk of forgetting that picturesque figure in the reign of King Hal who assuredly may be considered the first of antiquaries, the father of topography, and the forerunner of the horde of folk who perambulate Merrie England and set down much knowledge concerning her.

John Leland stands forth as a vivid personality the moment we really begin to think about him, a man with marked individuality, which probably bordered on the eccentric, blessed with the gift of observation, sometimes streaked with a grain of genius, and positively overflowing with industry. If he were a trifle conceited concerning himself and his doings, who can find it in their hearts to blame him ! The very title given to that

¹ "Spirit Teachings," p. 101.

² *Ibid.*, p. 198.