

thesis, that through the disintegration of the subliminal consciousness minds at a distance may be impressed. 2. The hypothesis of psychical radiations in which the "Astral Body" of the dead communicates with the medium. 3. The Spiritistic hypothesis which contends that communications are received from disembodied spirits. For those who admit that the manifestations proceed from spirits other than that of the medium it remains to be explained whether the spirits are disembodied spirits of the dead or other beings. It is difficult to prove the identity of the spirits; and they manifest a curious tendency to pretend to be great personalities, often with very ridiculous results. That the intelligences such as they are are prone to teach materialistic doctrines and to deny revealed truths strengthens the conviction of those who attribute the phenomena to a demoniac origin. But as we have said before, many still cling to the idea that even where all seems inexplicable there may eventually be found an explanation without having recourse to the Spiritistic hypothesis.

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From a practical point of view we may consider the dangers of Spiritistic practices apart from theories. There are at least two grave dangers which must be weighed: recourse to Spiritism frequently produces hallucinations in weak-minded people, and even the normal-minded expose themselves to severe physical and mental strain, often attended with serious results; and experience has shown that moral perversion is not rarely the consequence of Spiritistic practices. As regards those who attend as spectators it may be said that they are either co-operating in a swindle, or assisting at a process of moral degeneration. A decree of the Holy Office, March 30, 1898, condemns Spiritistic practices, even though intercourse with the demon be excluded, and communication sought with good spirits only. The Church, however, distinguishes between legitimate scientific inquiry and superstitious abuses. The following is the latest decree on the subject:

In a plenary meeting of the Cardinals Inquisitors General in matters of faith and morals on April 24, 1917, to the question proposed: "Whether it is lawful to assist at any Spiritistic communications (*locationibus*) or manifestations whatsoever, through a medium, in common parlance, or without a medium, whether hypnotism be used or not, even when they present an appearance of respectability or piety, either in interrogating souls or spirits or listening to answers or simply looking on, even with tacit or expressed declaration of not wishing to have anything to do with evil spirits," the said most eminent and most reverend Fathers, on April 27, decreed to reply: "In the negative on all points." The Pope has approved the resolution.

.. NOTES ..

Mendacity?

Last week we made a statement concerning the history of an attack made on the *Tablet* by the *Christchurch Sun*. We need not point out to our readers that we had every reason to believe the truth of what we said. We still believe it. The editor of the *Sun* says that there is not a word of truth in our statement, and accuses us of mendacity. On a charge like that from such a quarter there is nothing to be said. We leave to our readers the privilege of judging between us and the editor of the *Sun*. The *Sun* invites us to disclose the source of our information. Even if we were inclined to go to so much trouble to defend ourselves against such an attack as the *Sun's* we are not at liberty to make public the source of our information. We leave it to our readers to decide where the mendacity comes in at present.

"Encyclopedia Britannica"

A few years ago with a great blare of trumpets this work was foisted on a gullible public by a mer-

cenary press. A book has been written in criticism of the huge volumes with the significant title, *Misinforming a Nation*. It is proclaimed as a most dangerous and misleading work, distorting the truth and disseminating false ideas. If it deserves all the hard things said about its prejudiced views on history, art, science, and literature, it merits tenfold a castigation for its misrepresentation of Catholic doctrine. "It constitutes," says a critic, "one of the most subtle and malign dangers to our national development it has ever been our misfortune to possess."

Shelley

The mention of the fact that some letters of Shelley's have been discovered affords us an excuse for refreshing the memories of our readers with that marvellous passage of English prose in which Francis Thompson has added a new glory to the memory of his brother poet: "The universe is his box of toys. He dabbles his fingers in the day-fall. He is gold dusty with tumbling among the stars. He makes bright mischief with the moon. The meteors nuzzle their noses in his hand. He teases into growling the kennelled thunder, and laughs at the shaking of its fiery chain. He dances in and out at the gate of heaven: its floor is littered with his broken fancies. He runs wild over the fields of ether. He chases the rolling world. He gets between the feet of the horses of the sun. He stands in the lap of nature, and twines her loosened tresses after a hundred wilful fashions, to see how she will look nicest in his song." There it is! And did Shelley himself ever write anything to surpass it for pure poetry?

Vis Vivida Animae

John Morley tells us that but for the Latin and Celtic elements in English literature it would be a poor thing at its best. The Latin influence makes for gravity and dignity, and for the compactness of Tacitus or the verbosity of Cicero according to the natural bent of the writer. The Celtic spirit gives that nameless quality which is aptly described as *vis vivida animae*—the vivid fire of the soul. It is particularly to this quality that the best French prose owes its inimitable charm and grace, so elusive and so baffling. And it is noteworthy that when speaking of the excellence of French prose a first-class English critic can find among English classics none fit to compare with the French except the Irishman Burke. Here and there among Irish writers you will come upon stray passages drenched with the same unspeakable charm. Burke certainly abounds in such passages: so does Sheil. And it is a remarkable fact that the brightest writers on the London press have been Irishmen. Apart from this Celtic element, and from the almost negligible classical influence, English prose is as heavy as German.

How our Classics are Forgotten

We have remarked ere now that reading Scott or Dickens has become a lost art as far as most of the young generation are concerned. *A propos* we quote the following conversation recorded in the *Publisher's Weekly*:

"Are you fond of literature?" he asked.

"Passionately," she replied.

"Then you must admire Sir Walter Scott," he exclaimed with sudden animation. "Is not his 'Lady of the Lake' exquisite in its flowing grace and poetic imagery?"

"It is perfectly lovely," she exclaimed, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "I suppose I have read it a dozen times."

"And Scott's 'Marmion,'" he continued, "and 'Peveril of the Peak'?"

"I just dote on them," she replied.

"And Scott's 'Emulsion'?" he said, a faint suspicion dawning on him.

"I think," she interrupted rashly, "it is the most charming thing he ever wrote."

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