

goes to drive people nowadays to Spiritism. The poor ignorant Cockney whom the Reformation has robbed of the comfort of the Communion of Saints is a type of the many that hunger for assurance that the dead are not lost to them for ever; and the sardonic flippancy of the answers has in it the essence of all that could be said as to the true nature of the communications received in such ways by a yearning, ignorant, credulous people. In all ages there have been many persons who sought to penetrate into the dim region beyond the dark portals of death, not content with the knowledge vouchsafed them by God; and never, too, was a time when evil spirits were not ready to avail themselves of this human curiosity for their own ends. It is borne out by testimony from all sides that the Great War has made people hungrier for knowledge of the dead, and that men and women hitherto plunged in the materialism of the world are yearning for some assurance of a spiritual and abiding life behind the veil. For lack of better knowing, many are driven to Spiritism, and are thus exposed to innumerable dangers from which religion alone could save them. Spiritism reaps its harvest under such conditions; and it has become one of the real evils that came in the train of the war which was, according to politicians, to produce nothing but good.

Spiritism, which means the belief that the living can communicate with the spirits of the dead, must be distinguished from Spiritualism, which is the doctrine that teaches us that there is a spiritual order, as real as the material order which we see and feel and hear around us. Spiritism covers in a general way such phenomena as table-turning, knocks, messages from a distance, levitation, disappearances and appearances, and prophecies. One theory suggests that such phenomena may be explained by the hypothesis that we are surrounded in life by a world of spirits making various efforts to communicate with us, and that through specially endowed persons called mediums such communications are established. Another tells us that the phenomena may be explained by telepathy and by the unexplored powers of the sub-conscious soul within us, which is intimately connected with past, present, and future. There are, or at any rate there used to be, many who ridiculed Spiritism and condemned it straightway as conjuring or white magic. But in view of the testimony of men like Sir William Crookes, Professor Lombroso, and Sir Oliver Lodge, a writer in the *Dublin Review* rightly asserts that it is now impossible for any man "with the shadow of a claim to education to say the whole thing is nonsense." No doubt there is a great deal of trickery and fraud, but it is undeniable that, as Sir Oliver Lodge tells us: "The evidence goes to prove that discarnate intelligence under certain conditions may interact with us on the material side, thus gradually coming within our scientific ken." The Materialists are bitterly opposed to any such recognition as this, as it is a complete refutation of all their theories of life and being. Christianity has always taught the existence of a spiritual world, and sees nothing impossible in the fundamental position of Spiritism. It is not until Spiritists come to draw conclusions from the admitted phenomena that they come into collision with Revelation. The Church teaches us that the souls in Heaven are permitted to know what passes on earth and to be interested in the living. We are also taught that we can help the souls in Purgatory, who probably are endowed with knowledge of what happens among their friends on earth. So that in so far forth as Spiritism asserts that there are spirits, and that they are interested in us, it is on perfectly safe ground. Where it errs is in supposing that (1) we can communicate with the disembodied souls of the dead, and that (2) to seek to do so is right and expedient. The Church condemns both these errors. The dead are either in Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell; and it is impious to suppose that God would permit a soul to be called back at the request of some curious person, perhaps, to answer some trivial ques-

tion. And grave scientists who have gone deeply into the matter have, from an altogether different viewpoint, reached the same conclusion as the Church; that it is neither right nor expedient to seek to open up communication with spirits. Good Christians live and move in a world of spirits. They need no rappings and voices to assure them of the reality of spiritual things. They have the consolation of the Communion of Saints, and they ask to know no more than God permits concerning their dear dead friends. The hunger of others for knowledge of the dead is a proof of the void in human hearts from which religion has been stolen, and the true remedy is the restoration of the faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, let us quote the following words in which a contemporary sums up the problem:—

"I would advise them to have nothing to do with the attempt to seek consolation about the dead from converse, real or imaginary, with the spirits of the dead: and that mainly on three grounds: (1) that the best sort of consolation is to be found in putting your trust in Jesus Christ as the unique and final revealer of God and the spiritual world; and that the limits of knowledge under which He lays us had better be respected. (2) That the inquiries suggested are sure to lead to a morbid and excessive pre-occupation with the dead, and to upset the sane balance of the spiritual life. (3) That Spiritism is sure to develop a new sort of religion, a new kind of revelation, which, again, is fairly certain to be in more or less marked deviation from the belief of the Church and the New Testament; and if that is so, and if it is to be taken for granted that the source of this new disclosure are really spirits, then we must consider that spirits may be of different qualities, good and bad, and that the penalty of presumptuousness may be deception."

The Church will not allow us to believe that the souls of the dead may be evoked at the will of the medium. But the Church does not forbid us to believe that the demons, who are always ready to interfere for their own ends in our affairs, will not accept the invitation directed to others.

## NOTES

### Christian Courtesy

Newman's well-known description of a gentleman may be summed up in saying that a gentleman is one who never gives to another unnecessary pain. And, of course, the same thing holds for a lady. There are times when to avoid giving another pain would be neither gentlemanly nor Christian: Solomon was, we suppose, the greatest gentleman of his day, but he had wholesome views on the use of the rod in proper season. Few men who have become gentlemen have done so without suffering in the process, while their character was forming; and the children who have been disciplined on the old-fashioned lines are far more likely in after-life to regard their fathers as gentlemen than are the curled darlings who grow up without reverence for God or man and without anything in themselves for anybody to reverence. Apart, however, from pain that it is a duty or a charity to inflict, the true gentleman will hurt no man, and will hurt himself to avoid hurting others. He will bridle his tongue and place a gate of prudence before his lips lest a word, not only an injurious word but even a word that stings, cross them. He will remember at all times the Christian view of tale-bearers and scandal-mongers; he will have fine feeling enough to make him careful never to hurt the feelings of others; he will know that the smart speech that stings and the joke that wounds are the weapons of a cad; and consciousness of his own shortcomings will make him very careful as to how he criticises other people's faults. Learning, position, wealth never made a gentleman or a lady yet; true charity and an honest endeavor to follow Christ gave to

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