

MODERN SPIRITISM: ITS SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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Modern spiritism: its science and religion by A. T. Schofield

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Science
Gen. Sci. Dept.

BY

A. T. SCHOFIELD, M.D.

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Author of

"The Unconscious Mind,"
"Borderlands of Science,"
"The Goal of the Race"

Πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐκράξαμεν.

AUTHORIZED AMERICAN EDITION

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS

Pastor of Plymouth Church,

PHILADELPHIA
P. BLAKISTON'S SON & CO.
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1920



PREFACE

MODERN custom doubtless suggests that it would be well that a book like this, by an author who has not hitherto written on the subject, should be commended to its readers by a "Foreword" from some well-known authority.

The author may be pardoned if he very briefly states why this preface is written; and, in doing so, he would also recommend that it be read *before* the book, and not, as is now so common, afterwards.

Even previously to entering on a medical career the author began to study psychological problems, with the result that many years ago he wrote the first English book on "The Unconscious Mind." A paper he read on the subject at the Harveian Society was received with howls of derision, and the authorities were rebuked for allowing it to offend the ears of its learned members; all of which shows to our wiser generation the archaic condition of the psychology of that day. It is true I do not regard the unconscious mind as cosmic, as is the subliminal mind of F. W. H. Myers, and to a large extent the subconscious mind of Thomas Jay Hudson, of America; but substantially it is the same.

Professor William James has written scathingly of what was the condition then of psychological science for want of this knowledge.

Once it is recognised that consciousness is not co-extensive with mind, but only reaches less than half the way, it can be readily conceived that the word "subconscious" is the best for that mental region which can at times be brought within the range of consciousness by forced introspection; while "unconscious" is a far better word for that part which never by any effort can be brought within consciousness. If consciousness be called the "eye" of the mind it clears our thoughts, for much exists psychically that is beyond mental vision.

When the reader grasps the fact that the most modern views of Spiritist psychical phenomena show that the medium's trance is very largely, at any rate, a condition of unconscious mental activity, with more or less complete abeyance of consciousness, the relevancy of the above statement to our subject will be readily admitted.

Psychological problems have indeed for over thirty years been to me an absorbing study, including all those connected with Spiritism, many of which, I freely confess, are not yet fully solved.

Borderland questions have always proved a great attraction, and what I call the true Spiritualism of the Divine Revelation has long provided for me what I have ever felt to be the most elevated study of which the human mind is capable.

This book has been written at the very special and earnest request of a friend well known in the medical world, whose views as to the urgency of presenting to the public some fairly comprehensive monograph on the subject at this time coincided with my own.

The recent accession to the ranks of this doubtful cult of such well-known and honoured names as Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir A. Conan Doyle has undoubtedly acted as a stimulus to Spiritism.

A more critical view, however, of their work, as given towards the close of this book, seems to throw some doubt on the value of their accession to the deeper interests of this new "Religion."

It is most unfortunate for its success that Spiritism seeks to be both a science and a religion, which is impossible. So long as Sir Oliver Lodge was content to be scientific, which, in this connection, was but a very short time, so long did he advance the scientific status of Spiritism. But when he propounded dogmas, and when Sir A. Conan Doyle asserted *tout court* that "Spiritism is a religion," science was arrayed against both; and Sir William Barrett, in his earnest attempts to confine its objects to scientific investigations, was defeated.

Its present condition is, therefore, undoubtedly chaotic, and the benefit, or otherwise, that it derives from its recent distinguished converts will depend, in the author's estimation, entirely on the light in which one regards Spiritism: whether that in which Sir William Barrett sees it, or that in which it seems to fascinate Sir A. Conan Doyle.

Thirdly, and lastly, to round off this lay sermon, I have been studying for many years what may without offence be termed borderland disease, that is, those conditions which are somewhat casually included under the vague term of "functional nerve disorders." Here conditions allied to the trances of mediums are by no means rare, and their

continuous study over so long a period has certainly evolved an amount of analytical power in dealing with them that is not inherent. All this has helped me now. While I have not disguised my own beliefs, I am in hopes that some at least of my readers will admit that I have presented the case for and against Spiritism fairly and squarely. If Spiritism were all fraud, it would be no real danger to the nation; it is because it is not that this book is written. My work is to show that, however bad fraud may be, the actual action of evil spirits is infinitely worse. The subject on which I have been most dogmatic, is the one point on which I find myself in full agreement with the leading Spiritists—and that is its great hidden dangers.

I am glad this book appears after the Great War, and not before, for amidst its many evils the war has at least done one good. It has made the simple, the straightforward, the true, of greater value than formerly, and men to-day are not likely to accept the claims of Spiritism, however endorsed, without full investigation.

All the author asks, therefore, is that the book be read in such a spirit and without prejudice, for he then believes it probable that his readers can come to no other conclusion than that at which he himself has arrived.

ALFRED T. SCHOFIELD, M.D.

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FOREWORD

Cicero's question, "Is there a meeting place of the dead?" asked two thousand years ago, has suddenly taken on new meanings. The death of his daughter, Tullia, filled the heart of the great Roman lawyer with acute anguish. He read Socrates' arguments for the immortal hope over and over again, but with an increasing feeling that the argument was incomplete. Now comes a moment when three millions of homes in Britain, France and the United States have lost the noble boy whose future before that day of battle held only high hopes for all who loved the young soldier. Many a father and mother and lover have coerced the lips into silence, and with a solemn pride oft exclaimed, "God's soldier let him be! I could not wish him to a fairer death!" And then comes a revulsion, with the awful sense of loneliness, and the emptiness of life.

The inevitable result of the world war, therefore, and of the hillsides of Belgium and France, billowy with the graves of the noble dead, was a revival of spiritualism. Everywhere men are saying, "Does the soul survive bodily death?" Is immortality the next step in the ascending progress of the soul? Is it true that there is an unseen realm, within the reach of an outstretched arm? Since without the optic nerve there is no summer's landscape, is it possible that most of us have no spiritual nerve toward the realm immortal, while now and then an occasional person with a clairvoyant sense receives hints of an

unseen world? Suddenly, scientists are answering the question in the affirmative. Maeterlinck, Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge, and thousands of others insist that death does not end all. The arguments based upon instinct, the ascent of man, and the principles of philosophers, have reinforced the teachings and experience of Jesus for multitudes who hold to the Christian faith. Meanwhile, the spiritualist has come to the front. It is said that the number of persons who attended spiritualistic meetings on a single memorial Sunday, equalled the number of those that attended the Christian churches in the city of London on the self-same day. Even though we question the accuracy of this estimate it still remains true that uncounted multitudes are interested in the ouija board, in spirit photography, in seances, and in mediums, who claim to speak while in a trance, and to be voicing a message from the dead. It has, therefore, become important to the last degree that the scientist and the experts in physiological psychology, and the students of nervous phenomena should analyze this mass of material, sift the wheat from the chaff, prick the bubbles that have been blown by enthusiasts, and spread out before the normal mind the few facts that are left. Dr. Schofield's book represents the patient, long-continued investigations of a man singularly gifted by nature and trained by long experience to distinguish between that which is seeming and that which is real. His volume has received a warm welcome from the most thoughtful people in Great Britain, and it deserves careful-scrutiny of Americans who are interested in the borderland, where the seen and the unseen meet and mingle.

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS.