

## THREE SPIRITUALISTIC REPRINTS

Miracles and Modern Spiritualism. By Alfred Russel Wallace, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S. Third Edition. Revised and enlarged. (London: George Redway; 1896.)

Spiritualism. By Judge Edmunds and Dr. George T. Dexter. Australian edition. 2 vols. (Melbourne: W. H. Terry; 1898.)

The Spirits' Book. By Allan Kardec. Translated by Anna Blackwell. (London: George Redway; new edition, 1898.)

ALL who know the book will welcome a revised and enlarged edition of Dr. Wallace's collection of essays. Though it is exactly a quarter of a century since it first appeared, its arguments against hidebound scientific scepticism are just as useful and telling now as they were then. It is written, of course, from the spiritualistic rather than the Theosophical point of view, but nevertheless many a Theosophical student would find it a useful book to read himself in the first place, and then to lend to materialistic or agnostic friends. It marshals the arguments against the ignorant unbeliever very well, and it gives a good selection of authenticated examples of the action of non-physical forces.

The additional matter in this edition consists of a preface and two chapters on apparitions and phantasms. The latter consist largely of illustrative instances of appearances of the dead, and manifestations which seem to have been caused by them. One of these is delicious, not so much for the quite ordinary phenomenon which it describes, as for the way in which it incidentally illustrates the favourite attitude of the genuine Psychological Researcher. After an account of an awful howling and shrieking heard by several people, it is stated that three dogs which were sleeping in the various bedrooms of the haunted house were all found cowering down with fright, their bristles standing straight up—one of them, a bull-dog, hiding under a bed and trembling all over. The Psychological Researcher, however, soon disposes of all this; the sounds are summarily dismissed—"if not real natural sounds, they must have been collective hallucinations"; and as to the dogs, it is suggested that by a truly remarkable coincidence they might all at that moment have "been suddenly taken ill!"

In the new preface Dr. Wallace reviews the changes of popular opinion with regard to psychic phenomena which he has seen since he

first had his attention attracted to them in the year 1843. He is specially trenchant in his criticism of the theory which seeks to account for everything in heaven and earth by the action of a "subliminal self." He remarks: "The second or subconscious self, with its wide stores of knowledge (how gained no one knows), its distinct character, its low morality, its constant lies, is as purely a theoretical cause as is the spirit of a deceased person or any other spirit. To call this hypothesis scientific, and that of spirit agency unscientific, is to beg the question at issue" (p. xvi.).

Our veteran author remarks on p. 253 that "we do not yet possess sufficient knowledge to enable us to theorise on what may be termed the anatomy and physiology of phantoms." Surely here is a portion of his study in which Theosophical investigations might be of considerable assistance to him. But on the whole his book is distinctly useful and interesting.

Neither of these terms, I am afraid, could truthfully be applied to the second of these reprints. Mr. Edmonds no doubt deserves great credit for having perilled his reputation as Judge of the Supreme Court at New York by speaking out boldly in defence of the reality of spiritualistic phenomena at a time when to do so was to court a torrent of abuse and ridicule; but for all that his book is wearisome beyond expression. It consists chiefly of communications purporting to come from Swedenborg and Bacon, with occasional observations from Washington and Charlemagne; but none of these great people seem to have risen at all to the level of their earthly reputation, and their remarks do not differ appreciably from the deadly dulness of the ordinary trance address, while many of their statements are of course wildly inaccurate.

Somewhere between the two books which have been already noticed, we may class the third one. Allan Kardec's *Spirits' Book* is a remarkable production, containing as it does the answers given by various spirits through sundry mediums to over a thousand questions asked by its author on all kinds of subjects—the whole being supposed to constitute a system of spiritual philosophy. In the summary of its doctrines which Allan Kardec gives in the sixth section of his introduction we should find but little to object to, though it would need enormous additions and much greater precision of statement before it could be regarded as adequately representing the facts of evolution. The book could hardly be of much interest to any Theosophical student, but it undoubtedly marks a very great advance

from ordinary orthodox ideas. One might say, in fact, that it is by no means bad as far as it goes, only unfortunately it does not go half far enough. The point which should bring the followers of Allan Kardec so much nearer to us than are spiritualists in our country, is their firm advocacy of the great doctrine of reincarnation ; having so much of the truth, it seems a pity that none of them are ready to accept a little more, and come straight on to our platform.

The list of signatures appended to the prolegomena of this book, however, will serve to show that even this school of spiritualism has still a considerable gap to bridge over before we meet. It is as follows : " John the Evangelist, St. Augustine, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louis, the Spirit of Truth, Socrates, Plato, Fénelon, Franklin, Swedenborg," etc., etc. One wonders who is covered by the mystic, " etc., etc.," and whether the other names were all that the communicating entity could think of at the moment !

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